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A Novel.

BY

LIZZIE ALLDRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "BY LOVE AND LAW;" "THE WORLD SHE AWOKE IN;" "THE OLD ABBOT'S ROAD," &c.

"Now was there made, fast by the Touris wall,
A garden fair."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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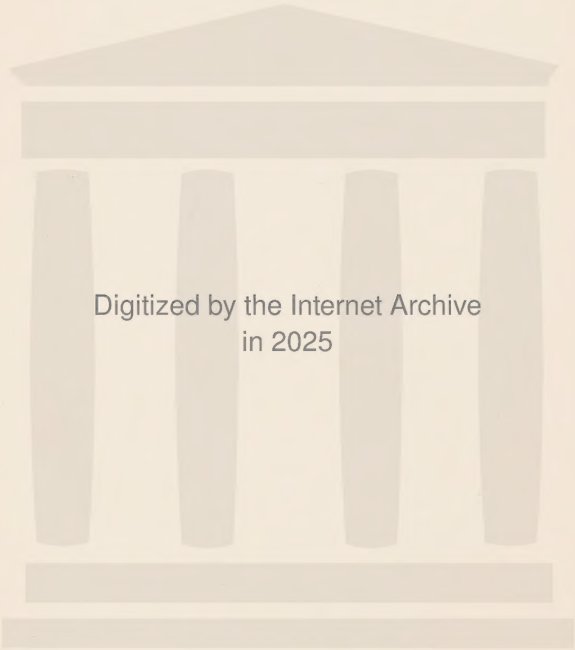
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THE

TOWER GARDENS.

CHAPTER I.

A DAY IN THE CITY SQUARE.

VERY early next morning Alison awoke with a start. What had happened? Was the house shaken by an earthquake? Were all the chimneys tumbling about her? Were they still at Cauldknowe, within sound of the Birren rushing down to the Solway, or indeed in London?

Alison opened her eyes and, collecting her thoughts, knew where she was, but not what had awakened her.

Jessie slept on, unconscious of any noise.

Alison listened, all was quiet again. Then there came a rush and a whirl and a clatter and then more clatter; then quiet, and the

chirping of many sparrows; Alison rose, went to the window and cautiously lifted a corner of the blind.

The noise was soon accounted for; it was caused by a couple of fish carts flying over the stony road-way, down Tower Hill to Billingsgate, the fish market, you know. They went at a tremendous rate, those fish carts, and so did the "costers'" hand-barrows that followed; light were the flying wheels that rattled down the Hill, and active were their owners.

Not much traffic, however, passed the sleepy corner where was Alison's new home, although the lower part of Tower Hill below it was crowded, and the streets leading down to the market all but blocked up.

The opposite windows were far away beyond the gardens of the Square; their blinds were all close drawn; the very houses seemed asleep. Alison was very sleepy, too, but nevertheless was impelled to linger at her window, by her wish to see that view of which she had heard all her life.

The morning was fresh and dewy; it was early summer on Tower Hill, although only yesterday in Scotland—yesterday, how long ago!—it had been spring, and the apple-trees had been in bloom.

"The Tower! That's the Tower!" Alison felt with delight, as her eyes recognised the four turrets.

"How lovely! Ah, how lovely! Earth can't have anything to show more fair!" From her window so high up above all she saw, she looked away, across the fore-ground of dew-laden trees and grass, down on to the grey mass of wall, bastions, towers, dwellings, belfries and masts, all bathed in the pure light of early morning. "It can't be real! It's too beautiful! It's fairy land!" Alison felt rather than thought, as she gazed down upon it with loving wonder.

"The Tower! That's the Tower! That is actually the Tower, where they all lived and suffered! Lady Jane Grey, blindfolded, stretching out her poor little hands to feel for the block, and asking, "Where is it? Where is it?" It happened just over there, beyond those quiet boughs, within those grey walls. The poor young princes, Elizabeth, Ann Askew, More, Fisher, Raleigh—only just beyond those trees, within those walls! It doesn't seem possible; I can't believe it."

She could not think of anything distinctly; it seemed to her as if all the history of England were before her, in a concrete form.

"Alie, what's happening? What are you

doing there?" presently asked a very sleepy voice.

"Looking at the Tower! Oh, Jessie, it's so lovely! It's wonderful! Do come and see it!"

"So sleepy!" murmured Jessie.

"The idea of your being sleepy when there's the Tower to be seen!" retorted Alison.

"You dreadful, dreadful, en-er-get-ic person—I'm dead asleep!" yawned Jessie Nevertheless, a few minutes later she, too, was standing at the window.

"This looks as if it were going to be a nice place to live in" said Jessie. "There's evidently something to be seen. Oh, Alie! do look at that man driving that queer cart! He's the merry 'coster' I'm sure, I've read about him. I recognize him at once. I love the rate he drives at. Oh do 'hi' him. 'Hi' him, will you Alie, and make him take us for a drive? I could so like spinning all over London at that rate, before anyone's up! Won't you 'hi' the gentleman? Hi! make haste, he'll be out of ear-shot directly, and I'm nearly asleep again. What, you won't? then your life shall be a burden to you, when I wake up."

"You were more able for it than I," said

Alison, Scotch-ly, laughing at the curious contrast between Jessie's drowsy voice and her brisk words.

"I shall regret that drive all my days; I do like the way in which he whizzes along. Oh, that's your Tower, is it? Good morning, Tower," and she nodded as if to an old and intimate friend. "Glad to see you, Tower!"

"Where's your bump of reverence?" asked Alison, who was still half spell-bound with what she saw.

"Fa-a-sh ashleep!" murmured Jessie, laying her pretty head on Alison's shoulders.

It was nearly eight o'clock before the girls resumed their conversation, and then what they said is hardly worth recording, except to tell you that they both remarked that it was nice to have a cup of tea brought to one before starting on the arduous work of the toilet, and that it was still more pleasant not to have to think about breakfast until it was ready;

"Although," remarked Jessie, "we enjoyed ourselves in a way, coffeeing and sconeing in that old kitchen in Birrendale, didn't we?"

Jessie was the first down that morning.

The dining-room she entered looked very different from John Harbuckle's den.

John Harbuckle had now another den, quite at the top of the house.

The dining-room was no longer overcrowded, the table was properly arranged with blue china for four.

It was very pleasant that morning. The sun shone in through the open window across the painted tiled flower-boxes, full of blooming pelargoniums, and a brisk breeze was tossing the boughs of the neighbouring plane-trees, and making a fresh music that could be heard above the heavy ground-swell of the traffic from the bonded warehouses.

"This is charming!" said Jessie, as she entered. "This is life! I do like life so much! One feels there are people about! A great many people! Ah!—What a letter for me already? That is good of Mac!" she cried with delight.

She took it up, there was no one to see her, she clasped it to her, "As if it had been a tender little babe." She did not open it at once, silly child; she kissed it, and turned it about, and really, it was almost a pity there was no one to see her, she looked so pretty as at last she read it.

It was not very long, just a few words to catch the post to let her know he was going to write a small volume that evening; and

that the whole of Birrendale had been to him, since Jessie had gone, enveloped in the densest darkness, and that he and Alec were going to leave no stone unturned, so that in a short time she might expect to hear very good news. At present, he was only conscious that she had been gone a very long while, and that everything was dark without her. The darkness seemed to stupify him, although he heard Alec say it was fine and the sun was shining.

This little note made Jessie very happy. Could Mac have seen her he would have thought and probably said that the radiance of her face was enough to make darkness flee away for ever. Poor Mac! He was feeling very lonely just then, at Muirhead.

Jessie, as she went over the lines again, retreated to the mantel-piece, on which she leaned her right elbow, while she held the note in her left hand.

"Dear Mac!" she said, looking tenderly at the note, "I am going to be very good to you; I am indeed!"

Then hearing footsteps she quickly folded the note and half covered it with the hand that rested on the mantel-piece.

The door was opened, John Harbuckle came in. For one moment Jessie kept her

position, and the old bachelor saw this lovely vision, his lost Jessie's daughter, standing with her wrist and hand crossing a well-defined, and too well-remembered vein in the marble —the precise spot where he had found, one morning, the fatal letter that had parted him from Jessie's mother for ever.

He had been twenty-nine then, he was fifty-three now.

And Jessie Bayliss came to greet him with so sweet a grace! He was very deeply moved and so was she, but from quite another cause; she knew nothing of that vision he had seen, she was thinking of Mac Carruthers.

"I hope you are none the worse for your journey," John Harbuckle said, gravely.

"Oh, no!" said she, "I slept and slept until Alie thought I would never wake up."

"And have you seen your aunt yet?" enquired John Harbuckle, a little uneasily.

"No; but Alison's been helping her. They'll be down directly. And, oh, uncle John! what a charming place to live in! How full of life it is. I do like people so much! I shall be so fond of London soon!"

"I hope you will be, Jessie; I hope you will be," said John Harbuckle; and as he turned to his own correspondence he was aware that Jessie had slipped into the sacred arm-chair,

in which his mother had died. He was not hurt by seeing her lithe young form where so long he had watched with infinite tenderness but sad pain, that old and shrunken figure ; it was a comfort to him to see Jessie there.

Alison was the next to arrive.

"Slept well, my dear?" asked uncle John, glancing up from his little pile of papers.

"I was a long while going to sleep, and I woke early to look at the Tower. It was so lovely in the early morning!"

Uncle John rose with his customary deliberation, went to the book-case, took down a volume of "Knight's London," put it into Alison's hands, and resumed the reading his letters.

Alison went to the window-seat, looked for a moment or two at the book, then closed it over her fingers and gazed out of the window as if mesmerised.

Uncle John, turning slightly to look at her, saw she was quite lost. Her eyes were unusually bright, but her gaze was with her thoughts and they were beyond Tower Gardens.

Utterly absorbed in what she gazed at, and wholly unconscious of herself, she nevertheless made a very pleasant picture to uncle John, a

picture that brought no sad memories with it, as she sat there with her grey dress touching the bright flowers in the boxes, and her neat brown head against a back-ground of waving boughs, her hand between the pages of the large and much used book.

"She has evidently the 'right feeling!'" said uncle John to himself, "she and I will be great friends."

Now Mrs. Bayliss had occupied the room immediately under the girls. Mrs. Bayliss awoke in very bad spirits. It is always exceedingly trying for the daughter of a house to return to her old home except in prosperous circumstances, and Mary Bayliss was only too conscious that she had come back as a failure. She had made her venture upon the sea of independent life, and shipwreck had been the result.

When she opened her eyes in the morning and recognized the carving on the venerable four-post bedstead which had been one of the first objects that had attracted her gaze as an infant, she turned on her pillow and wept bitterly, not only for her husband and her own lost home, but for herself; it galled her so terribly to come back again to the old house in Trinity Square.

She rose and made a careful toilet forgetting

nothing that could help her to maintain her dignity. Her crape was new and uncrumpled, her hem-stitched bands without a crease, her cap set firmly over her smooth faded hair, its broad white strings floated gracefully behind her, her jet broach and heavy jet chain, and in fact all the insignia of her widowhood were fresh and imposing.

Presently she drew up the blind, faced the well-remembered view with severe eyes, and hated it. She had never, since quite early years, liked it; she had been eager to leave it with her James Bayliss; her visits to it had been very rare; she had seldom come there except when she could not well help it, as, for instance, a few weeks before Alison was born, when her husband had been ordered to India and she could not go with him.

"No," she said, looking across the square to the Tower, "no, I never liked the place and I never can like it. I simply detest it. Ah! how well I remember my feeling of delight when I took my last look of it on my wedding day! Just as the carriage was turning that corner down below into Tower Street, I looked up at the old place and thought how thankful I was to be leaving it and the hateful City for ever! It's too hard to have to come back to it!—too hard! My girls—his girls!

if it had not been for you, no earthly power should have brought me back! I trust to make John move somewhere else; but he's such a thorough citizen! I know I shall have a difficulty with him."

And with such like reflections Mary Bayliss went down to breakfast in a distinctly dismal frame of mind, to find the other members of the little household awaiting her arrival.

At the entrance of Mrs. Bayliss the *rêveuse* started, and left the window. She had already seen her mother that morning.

John Harbuckle rose, shook his sister's hand, and moved the chair at the head of the table for her.

"I hope you've had a good night, Mary," he began.

"Pretty good," said Mary, taking the chair. "My head aches this morning."

She looked round the room for an instant, but without anything like interest, until at last she caught sight of a photograph of herself hanging over the mantel-piece.

"My dear John, you really shouldn't," she began, reproachfully.

"It's always been there. I didn't like to remove it," said John.

"Then please do it at once," said Mary.

"I'll take it upstairs to my study presently," said John.

"No, destroy it, please; I really can't feel comfortable, with such an atrocity in the house."

"Well, my dear, just as you like; but it's an old friend, and I'm attached to it. I admit the dress of the period was not admirable, still, you know, it *was* the dress of the period, and I suppose, as such, has a certain value."

Of course by this time both the girls were looking at the portrait. It had been taken a few days before Mary's wedding, when the crinoline skirt and scoop bonnet were raging with their fiercest virulence.

Photographs of twenty-three years ago, are, one may say, invariably hideous in the eyes of to-day. Mary Bayliss was singularly unfortunate with her portraits; and yet she had always been given to understand, that at the time she was married, she was not very far from being a pretty woman.

She turned that portrait to the wall, before she began to serve the breakfast.

John Harbuckle felt more than a little frightened of Mary; but, after a brief silence, he ventured to ask, as he passed her a poached egg, "Did you happen to notice the oak chest in your room?"

"I did notice something of the sort," said Mary ("Have I given you enough sugar, John?); yes, I saw it, but I haven't examined it yet. You remember dear James brought me a fine camphire wood chest from India? I have it with me; but you can use any number of things of that sort."

"A remarkably fine example of Jacobean work," John put in, quietly. "Those in the girls' rooms are Florentine."

"And are those two lovely chests for us, uncle John?" asked Jessie.

"If you will accept them," said uncle John. "I couldn't get them quite alike, but they are as near alike as I could manage it."

"Alison, you have a chance of being tidy now," said Jessie.

"I'm sure I'll try my hardest," said Alison; "the pleasure of opening that old lid, will induce me to put my things away."

"I'm sure Alison isn't untidy," said uncle John, with a benevolent smile; "she looks the picture of neatness."

"Ah! I fear I add hypocrisy then to my other crimes," said Alison, with a mock sigh.

"If she only were half as tidy as she looks, indeed she would be grand!" said Jessie, merrily. "But what can you expect of a literary woman, uncle John?"

"I shall expect a great deal," said uncle John. "First of all, I shall expect to find her a delightful companion, and in that I am sure I shall not be disappointed."

"Now I'm going to be jealous," cried Jessie, pretending to pout.

"There are varieties of excellence," said John Harbuckle, looking across at Jessie, adding, with a very decided smile, "especially among girls;" then remembering that he had not included all the company, he further extended his remark by—"and women."

"Thank you, uncle John!" said the girls, in so pleasant a duet, that even Mary Bayliss smiled.

So the breakfast table was far from dull.

"I'll show you the drawing-room," said uncle John, when they had finished the meal. "I've scarcely done anything to it, because I thought it would be better for you to choose the curtains and carpets; I think you'll like my furniture; every piece is the best example of the style I could get; but if you should like something more modern, I can—well, for the present, I can take it up-stairs."

"Jessie, you'll have to look after the plants," he went on, as they left the dining-room, and paused for a moment before the palms and ferns in the passage. "Now, Mary, you

mustn't look at the room as it is now, you must consider its potentialities."

"Please what does that mean?" asks Jessie.

"It means you are to think how nice you can make it," said he, opening the door.

The room said distinctly that no woman above the rank of Mrs. Robbins had had anything to do with it for many years.

In spite of much recent turning out and cleaning there was still an odour of turpentine about it. "The carpet and curtains are the old originals," said Mary. "I can just make out the patterns, although they're faded past recognition. This is nice," and she took up a small Wedgwood tray of a ground of the faintest *chocolat-au-lait*, with a dainty little white lace-like pattern running round the border.

"I thought it would do for your four-o'clock tea," said John.

"Oh, but we shall never have any visitors here!" said Mary. "Who'll come to see us here?"

"Well, then, it will do for yourselves. The girls must always have pretty things every day. Ten o'clock: I must be going down to business now. You'd like to see Mrs. Robbins, I suppose."

"Yes, I think I'd better."

"Very well," and he rang the bell.

Mrs. Robbins's niece appeared in a minute.

"Will you tell Mrs. Robbins that Mrs. Bayliss wishes to inspect her department? Very well, then, Mary, I'll say good-bye until lunch, and I'll leave you in the hands of Mrs. Robbins."

"Very well, John. Here let me put your necktie straight, it's all askew."

"Thanks; and Mary," said John, lowering his voice, "I think you must admit that Mrs. Robbins's talent is undoubted."

"The dinner was very well served yesterday," said Mary, rather shortly.

"Perhaps it would be as well to take a little time to consider——" he suggested.

"I'll keep my eyes open and my mouth closed,"said Mary, with a vigorous application of the clothes-brush to the collar of her brother's coat. "You'll have to get a new coat, John, this is simply disgraceful!"

"Anything you like to suggest, my dear," acquiesced John.

Mary sighed, which had in it a double regret, first for her own lamented James, the superior cut of whose clothes she now recalled, and also for her brother's well-remembered short-comings in that matter.

"For which reason," she said to herself, "I was never so hard on Jessie's mother for throwing John over in favour of poor Arthur, as perhaps, I ought to have been. James and Arthur always knew how to dress. Of course, dear James, being a soldier, it was only to be expected of him, but Arthur was certainly the best dressed civilian I ever met."

John Harbuckle disappeared behind the baize doors. The two girls ran upstairs to begin their unpacking, and Mrs. Bayliss went to inspect Mrs. Robbins's department, the offices of which were situated behind the dining-room.

The department seemed, to the outward eye, in excellent working order; Mrs. Robbins's manner was dignified, certainly, but withal friendly, and even loquacious; she received Mrs. Bayliss and her remarks with the most suave good humour. Luncheon and dinner were arranged satisfactorily, after a brief and amicable consultation, and Mrs. Bayliss was leaving, when, as if inspired by a sudden thought, she said,

"Oh, by-the-bye, Mrs. Robbins, I should like to see the tradesmen's books. I'll pay them every week in future."

"Oh, certainly, mem," said Mrs. Robbins. "Annie," to her niece, "bring Mrs. Bayliss the books."

Annie obeyed, and put into Mrs. Bayliss's hand a neat pile of new books, rosy and just as they had come from the stationer's, with their gilt lettering fresh and untarnished.

"Oh—we are to start afresh! Well, that's a very good arrangement. The old books were all paid up, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, mem. Perhaps you'd like to see them?" asked Mrs Robbins, with the smile of conscious innocence.

"Well, yes, I should," said Mary.

"Where are they, Annie?" asked Mrs. Robbins, ingenuously. "Let me see, didn't Mr 'Arbuckle ask for them to be brought up to him? Yes, now I come to remember, he did! You took them up, didn't you, Annie? Yes, she did, mem, I recollect it now. They'll be in master's study. Annie, you run up and fetch them for Mrs. Bayliss."

"Well," said Annie, who had opened one of the dresser drawers and was fumbling about in it, "I did take them up, but I think Mr. Harbuckle must have burned them, or tore them up—for this was all that was left of them, when I went to clean up yesterday morning." And from out of the drawer (which, by-the-bye, was not up to the rest of the department in neatness or cleanliness) she produced several dingy red covers.

"Oh, well, never mind, it doesn't at all matter. You'll let me have the new ones every Tuesday morning." And Mrs. Bayliss retreated to her own room.

"So John's burned his books, has he? That tells its own tale. Mrs. Robbins will have to go," she said, as she went upstairs. She had not, however, been many minutes alone before there was a gentle tap at her door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Bayliss, wearily.

"Oh, if you please, mem," said Mrs. Robbins, "I thought I'd better tell you at once, that R. and me's thinking of going into business."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, mem, in the second-hand furniture and French-polishing line."

"Ah! He's picked up some little knowledge since he's been here, I daresay. When would you like to leave, Mrs. Robbins?"

"Well, mem, we don't want you to put yourself out of the way, of course, but supposing we say this day month?"

"Very well. If you can let Annie come up to help me unpack, I shall be obliged. Will it be all the same to you if we say this day fortnight?" she asked after a short pause.

"I should much prefer it, mem," said Mrs. Robbins, haughtily straightening her neck.

"Then so let it be," said Mrs. Bayliss, with severity.

"I told you so, R.," observed Mrs. R. to her lord shortly afterwards. "I wouldn't live with that woman, no, not for all the soverings that ever was made over there in the Mint! She's mean, R., mean! and if there's one creature on the face of the earth that asperates me, it's a mean woman! and she without a penny too! Ah! set a beggar on 'orse bag and we know where he—and more partickler where *she*'ll drive to!"

"There, there, I never thought you two'd 'it it! Never mind, old gal, we know of a nice little place up Holborn way, don't we?" was the consoling reply of the loving R.

"When I think of what that pore old man 'ave brought on hisself!" said Mrs. R., holding up both her hands. "Well, there's one thing, R., them that don't know when they're well off, deserves what they get. He'll think of us, I guess, when the serpint's tooth comes 'ome to him, as come 'ome it will, and we'll live to see it, mark my words! Lor', R., wasn't she took aback when I hupped and give her notice! Cool as a coocumber, if you please, but, *took aback!* that wasn't the move

she'd expected. Bless yer! she'd made up her mind to give *me* notice; *me!* who's never had notice give me in all my born days!"

But, if Mrs. Robbins flattered herself that Mrs. Bayliss was annoyed, she flattered herself in vain; for Mrs. Bayliss merely said to herself, as Mrs. Robbins closed the door:

"Well, that matter has arranged itself without me! and under the circumstances, nothing could have been better!"

And dismissing the affair, after a very little more thought, she plunged into her unpacking.

John Harbuckle sighed when he heard of the news, for if there was one thing to which he took kindly, it was his dinner.

It was not until the cool of the evening that any of the little party went out; for Mary was tired in the afternoon and her head ached terribly, by that time she did not care to take the girls out, and as John was too busy and they could on no account be allowed to go without some one to take care of them, they stayed in, arranging their things and reading.

"Are we never to be allowed to go out without you or uncle?" asked Jessie, as she brought a cup of tea to Mary during the afternoon. "I'm beginning to feel like a

prisoner in the Tower. And Alison wants dreadfully to prowl and explore."

"This isn't at all the place where girls can go prowling about by themselves," said Mrs. Bayliss. "You can't walk East, because that's horribly disreputable; North leads to the Jews' quarter, you can't go there; West is the City, where you can't possibly be seen; and you can't go South, unless you want to walk into the Thames."

"Oh! then we're quite cooped up!" sighed Jessie, "I don't like being cooped up."

"Remember Jessie, I was a girl here myself once; so I ought to know what is right and proper here."

"Oh, but that was years and years ago!" put in the thoughtless Jessie. "People know how to behave now. I'm dying to go out. I'm not used to being shut up and kept in."

"Well, at any rate you can't go out to-day, until uncle John can take care of you," said Mrs. Bayliss, in so tart a tone that Jessie withdrew at once, and she and Alison had to content themselves with what they could see from the windows. I'm afraid Jessie regretted the brae-side and the banks of the Birren water; but as for Alison, the view of the Tower, and Charles Knight's delightful book opened a most wonderful and charming new world to her.

"Can you come out with us, Mary?" asked John, as he finished his after-dinner coffee.

"Not this evening; my head is too bad."

"Then suppose I take the girls into the Tower Gardens? I hope it doesn't take them long to dress."

"No, indeed!" And away they both flew.

And in a very few minutes John Harbuckle and the two girls went past the baize door, and down the uncarpeted stairs beyond, through the deserted entrance hall, that during the day was always so full of life, opened the heavy double door and heard it slam behind them.

Tower Hill was looking as if it had been hard at work all day. The pavement was dusty and littered by bits of paper and straw. One or two heavy vans were still in front of the houses; but traffic had nearly ceased and most persons had gone home. A few street boys ran about playing and shouting; a few groups of labourers lounged against the railings or at any vacant corners, having apparently nowhere else to go.

John Harbuckle and the girls crossed over to the Tower Gardens and entered them through the same gate by which the old bachelor had passed on that evening in the spring, which he was destined so long to remember.

Beyond the gate they were under the shadow of many trees, and separated from the dusty pavement by a high bank of sloping turf; they felt at once far in the country. They all strolled along the gravel path above the deep moat, pausing every other minute to look at the Tower and to discuss its historical associations.

They walked the whole length of the garden from the gate near the public entrance of the Tower to the little wilderness in which the walk terminates, hard by Iron Gate Wharf, on the other side of the buildings; and then they returned.

The evening was very lovely, one of those sweet sober twilights in which everything looks beautiful. By the time they returned the lights were already twinkling here and there in the barrack windows and glowing through the deep embrasures of the bastions, like furnaces.

The girls and John Harbuckle sat down on a wooden bench near the gate by which they had entered, under the acacia trees, with their feet on the stone coping, and the moat sheer beneath them.

The evening was so still that they could hear the swish—swish of the river steamers that passed the Tower Wharf.

"I always think this is the most beautiful view of the Tower," said John Harbuckle; "especially on a evening like this. Even the very cowls of the chimneys look lovely against that soft grey sky. All the colours and lines seem to run into one very exquisitely. That's the old Beauchamp Tower nearly opposite—that was the State prison. Those roofs and tall chimneys belong to the dwellings within the precincts."

So they all sat quietly talking and looking until it grew nearly dark. And then they paused; until the silence grew oppressive to Jessie.

"Oh," said she, with a shudder, "let us go in. I'm getting eerie! Is it true, that the shadow of the axe is sometimes seen on those Tower walls?"

"Subjectively," said John Harbuckle, with a grave smile, "the shadow of the axe is always seen there."

"Oh, then, do take me home!" cried Jessie, turning away, and clinging to Alison's arm. "I should die with fright if I saw it."

"But, objectively, no one ever saw it," continued uncle John, his smile broadening. "I have walked about these gardens ever since they have been laid out and I have never yet seen either the axe or its shadow;

although I've many a time watched the Tower at the 'witching hour of night. Come, girls, we'll go home. Are you superstitious, Jessie?"

"Frightfully," said Jessie. "Our brae-side by Cauldknowe was haunted, you know."

"Jessie! how can you talk such rubbish," said Alison, who wanted to stay out longer. "Uncle John, did you ever see a ghost?"

"I'm not quite sure," said uncle John, slowly and with a hesitation. To himself he added:

"That voice; I could have sworn to it! and Jessie's is so like it. Whenever Jessie speaks I hear that voice again. And that man at the station? The outcome of my own morbid dreams, that's all. No, Jessie," he said aloud with decision, "I never saw a ghost, I never expect to see one, and if this place isn't haunted I should say none was."

"Yes—still, you know, still, very curious things have happened!"

"Merely coincidences! Jessie," he said, "merely coincidences!"

"Well, don't let any coincidences happen to me! I should die, if I saw a ghost, even if it were only a coincidence," said Jessie. "I should just fall down dead, I am sure I should."

CHAPTER II.

TRINITY MONDAY.

FEW girls have ever enjoyed their first visit to London more thoroughly than did Alison and Jessie.

During their first fortnight in their new home the weather was perfect; and what can one want better than a fine June day in London? The great town seemed to them, compared to the Scotch burghs and villages among which their five last years had been spent, a vast universe; and everything was so large, so grand, so beautiful, so forward, so very much the best that could be had, that it was altogether delightful.

Everything, in its fresh novelty, was altogether delightful, especially, to Jessie, the inexhaustible quantity of dress and bonnet shops; especially, to Alison, the City itself.

Of course there were many new things to be bought. The dresses that had not been too warm for spring in Scotland were too warm for summer in London, so all sorts of light

fabrics had to be made up; in the choosing and making of which Jessie took an enormous interest. And so, in spite of her grief, did Mrs. Bayliss, for there is certainly something peculiarly soothing to most feminine minds in new and pretty clothes. On this subject Jessie and Mrs. Bayliss sympathized deeply. They spent, it is true, comparatively little, but they saw a great deal for their money, always studying very many shop windows before buying anything; so, at a trifling cost, Jessie by dint of remembering what she saw, could indulge herself in imaginary raiment to any extent, and of unparalleled beauty. Jessie always knew exactly how she would look in anything, and took an infinite delight in mentally arraying herself in the most charming and costly toilettes, while in reality she was perfectly satisfied with a sixpenny print, provided she was allowed a modest quantity of cream-coloured lace at three-pence three-farthings a yard, wherewith to adorn her pretty wrists and throat. There was only one drawback to Jessie's enjoyment—there was no Mac to see how nice she looked, that sometimes made her rather sad; only there was always such long letters every day and that kept her happy.

In all these things Alison might also for a

time have taken very deep interest, had not both Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie resolved that she must have a hat in which she really would look her best; for these kind people always felt that Alison never did justice to herself and never looked her best. This was a very terrible resolve as far as Alison was concerned; acting upon it, they ruthlessly dragged her from shop to shop, they made her try on hats by the dozen—she was very difficult both to please and suit—and at last bought her something in which she looked, they declared, quite another being; of the truth of which assertion she felt only too certain every time she put it on, she did not know herself in it the least. This experience gave her more than a distaste for shopping with the others.

After a few days the two girls were allowed to go out by themselves, but only along duly specified routes; these routes being to St. Paul's Churchyard and back with the choice of Cheapside or Cannon Street.

"And upon no account go up Mincing Lane or Mark Lane, or any of the business lanes," said Mrs. Bayliss one day, as they passed the first-mentioned turning on their way to Cannon Street Station. Mrs. Bayliss always took them to the West End when she went out with them herself.

"Why?" asked Jessie, who alone of all the household was rarely afraid of her aunt. "It looks just a common-place street, only the cabs and waggons will accumulate at its corners and make it difficult to cross."

"But it's quite a business place," said Mrs. Bayliss. "No woman ought to be seen there."

"Well, at any rate, there go a couple of girls," said Jessie.

"Telegraph girls, my dear! When I said 'no woman' I meant, of course, no gentlewoman."

"I thought a gentlewoman could go anywhere," put in Alison.

"My good child, where did you get that notion from?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, with severity.

"To confess the truth, mother," said Alison, "I went through Mincing Lane yesterday afternoon by myself, and no one took the slightest notice of me. It is true," she added, ingenuously, "I wasn't wearing my new hat."

"Yesterday! why I thought you and Jessie were at work in the square gardens."

"So we were, but I'd been reading about these Lanes, and I wanted to see them; so as Jessie had found a nice little companion, I thought I would go out."

"Tsh! tsh! tsh! what do you think your uncle John will say?"

"I know," said Alison, "for I met him just by here, and he looked quite delighted to see me. He said, 'Well Alison, I'm so glad to find you've come out alone!' and he took me up Seething Lane and down a court, Blackraven Court, to show me the backs of some old houses there. And we talked about Mr. Pepys, who used to live in Seething Lane. (I had been reading some of his diary in the morning.) I told uncle John that I was going to invent names of my own for the City streets, and that in future I was going to call that turning 'Pepys' Lane.' He looked so delightful. It was very kind of him to take up so much of his time with me. It was very interesting, everything is interesting about here, and I'm quite sure I could walk about the City all day without being noticed."

"I never went up the business lanes by myself except on Sundays or of an evening when I was a girl," said Mrs. Bayliss, emphatically.

"Ah, but mother," said Alison, a humorous little smile playing in the sharp corners of her lips, "you were a pretty girl, that makes all the difference. Pretty girls can't go where plain ones can."

"Well, don't do it again, Alie," said Mrs. Bayliss, her sternness obviously melting.

She was a woman who never objected to being reminded of those good looks that were now no more, and her daughter's compliment, which was indeed to both of them but the unvarnished truth, softened her temper considerably for the rest of the little journey.

Always, always, my dear friend who may read this, always have a neat little store of pleasant truths at hand for your own relatives, if you would have your domestic life run smoothly.

Dear to most of us is a well-turned and approximately truthful compliment from any one, but doubly dear is it from members of our own family. Members of our own families please remember this: we really do like to hear pretty things from you, better than from nearly every one else. Alas! that we should hear them so rarely!

"Plain girls can go where pretty girls can't," said Alison; and before she had lived very long in the City she found that saying of hers had even more truth in it than she had at first thought She felt perfectly safe and secure from notice when she was alone, but lost that sense of security as soon as Jessie

was with her. She nearly always kept to the main thoroughfares with Jessie; she felt that Jessie was a charge, that she must take great care of her.

One morning, it was on a Monday, Trinity Monday, the two girls were returning about noon from their usual walk to St. Paul's, when, as the Tower was already within sight, they heard a loud but melodious peal of bells suddenly break out, high up above the roar of the mid-day traffic, into a chime that recalled to them the dear old nursery tune we have all sung to the familiar rhyme:

"Oranges and lemons,
Said the bells of St. Clement's."

"What lovely bells!" the girls both exclaimed, simultaneously; for having so recently come from Scotland a whole chime of bells was still something new and wonderful to them.

"Which of all the many churches about here do they come from?" said Alison.

"Ah, I know!" said Jessie, after a moment or two of listening, "from the church at the corner, Barking Church, where, as Auntie told me yesterday, my poor parents were married. I wonder if the bells rang out so merrily for them on the pouring wet day on which they were married."

"How do you know it was a wet day?" asked Alison.

"'Happy is the bride the sun shines on,'" said Jessie, "so it can't have shone on that day. Well, there's no wedding there now, in spite of the bells. The doors are fast locked or I'd go in," she added a few minutes later, as they paused for an instant before the grimy brick belfry of All Hallows', Barking, the old church at the junction of Tower Street and Seething Lane, from whose tower Mr. Pepys himself watched the burning of the Great Fire, the same old church beneath whose high altar his late Majesty King Edward the First believed that the heart of his Majesty's illustrious predecessor, King Richard the First, was buried (in which belief he erred, thereby proving that, even as early as the days of the Plantagenets, kings were fallible); the very same old church before whose modern porch Arnold Birkett had stood not many weeks before, longing for an annihilation that refused to come to him.

"Why are the bells ringing so, to-day, I wonder?" said Jessie. "Hark, there are others further off!"

"We'll soon find out," said Alison, eagerly; "uncle John is sure to know."

So they hurried through Barking Church-

yard, while overhead the bells rang out in the City-scented atmosphere.

> Cast away care,
> Said the bells in the air:
> Why so much trouble?
> What's Life but a bubble?
> So, centuries marking,
> Said the sweet bells of Barking.

But I don't for one moment suppose the girls heard this jingling ryhme, nor had they much time to think of anything, for when they came to Catherine Court, just by their own new home, what should they see passing under the old iron-work of its entrance but a stately Beadle, carrying a large silver-headed wand, and leading a procession with a grandiose dignity to which no other functionary than a Beadle can by any possibility attain.

The procession was, always excepting the Beadle, by no means a stiff or formal one; it consisted of a number of gentlemen, who moved easily along and appeared to be on friendly terms with each other, although some wore the dress of ordinary civilians and others, the majority, a dark blue uniform, enlivened by gold braid and buttons.

"I know what it is; it's the Trinity Brethren going to church," cried Alison, catching sight of a distinctly clerical figure in the first rank of the procession.

"Jessie, we'll go with them! They can't

be going far!" Alison went on, for the sight of the procession made her eager to run after it. "Just let us tell mother, or she'll be wondering what has become of us. Make haste! We shall miss them, and I wouldn't miss them for anything. Make haste!"

"I don't think I want to go!" said Jessie, hesitating. "But of course if you do—oh, well, I don't care!" so lightly did Jessie decide upon taking what was really a very important step.

Not the slightest suspicion crossed her mind that she was really making a decision that was to effect all her future life.

The coming event cast at that moment no shadow on her. It was a matter of indifference to her whether she went or not.

"They won't trust me by myself," said Alison, "you must come with me. Make haste. Oh, there's mother! Can she be going?"

She was going, with her thickest veil drawn over her face, and her most funereal aspect.

"Mother, we've just seen the Trinity Brethren, and we—that is, I—want to go to church with them," said Alison, hurriedly.

"I'm going too. It is at St. Olave's, Hart Street, the church, Alison, where your dear father and I were married, our Parish Church."

Her words fell like a sudden chill upon the

girls. They both turned at once and went with her.

The Brethren and their attendant rabblement, for Alison was far from being the only person attracted by the sight, were passing out of the further end of Catherine Court when the ladies again saw them. They went a short distance along Seething Lane, into which Catherine Court leads, until they came to the great gate of St. Olave's Church-yard, known as The Gate of The Dead.

Another crowd had gathered there, but had parted to admit the Brethren, who were still passing under the gateway when Mrs. Bayliss and the girls arrived. They had to stand for a few minutes awaiting their turn.

The church-yard beside of the old grey tower of St. Olave's is at any time a picturesque opening among the tall warehouses of that City Lane, it seems like a little bit of country in the very heart of London.

On that brilliant summer morning the sunlighted trees waved briskly in the breeze, while the bells of All Hallows, at the other end of the Lane, rang out their peel, and the bells of St. Olave's clashed and clangoured as the Brethren passed in to their annual service by the black Gate of The Dead, whose gloom no sunshine had power to relieve.

The Gate of The Dead! The memorial of those who died in the Great Plague! There it stood, tall, black, heathenish. As each living Brother went in, above his head grinned three skulls, set with a grimness almost grotesque, at the angles of two cross-bones, while another skull at each corner of the portal looked down on the divided crowd; the whole of the gate being guarded by a repellent *chevaux-de-frise* like an army of impaled star-fish turned to grimy metal.

Hopeless, heathenish, as hopeless, as heathenish as if no Divine Voice, saying: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," had ever been heard in this world; as hopeless and grim with the blackness of darkness as if for centuries those Divine Words had never once fallen on mourner's ear in that very church-yard.

"I shouldn't like to come out by that gate if I were a bride!" thought Jessie, as she glanced up at the skulls.

"By that gate James and I left the church, as bride and bridegroom," thought Mrs. Bayliss as, all the brethern having passed in, she and the girls followed.

They crossed the church-yard that Mr. Pepys had found so terribly full after the Plague, into the Diarist's "Owne Church," where he and his pretty wife were sleeping

a sleep far too profound for the loud peeling organ to disturb.

Within St. Olave's the *coup d'œil* was very bright and beautiful. Ancient as is the Church, no gloom, no must, no scent of dead men's bones was there. The form and colouring of the edifice itself were lovely.

St. Olave's is one of the few City churches that escaped the Great Fire. It is a singular fine example (as John Harbuckle would say) of the Fourteenth Century Perpendicular.

On that memorable Trinity Monday, as the bright sun was streaming in through the great windows, lighting up the dark grey-brown of the polished columns and arches, the vermilion of the stiff folds of certain kneeling Elizabethan figures, the white robes of clergy and choristers, the blue and gold of the Brethern, nothing could well be more charming than this time-honoured City Sanctuary.

With some difficulty they found seats, Alison and her mother together, Jessie in front of them, with a silvered-haired and very literally Elder Brother beside her, and two others nearly as old before her.

It was pretty, when the service began and they all stood up to see Jessie the centre of that white-headed group, Jessie in her cotton

dress of soft grey, for she was scarcely out of mourning, Jessie so young and fresh and fair!

Presently the service grew special. There came a grand psalm about the sea, and Jessie's face became more serious as she followed the verses that described the storm:

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters—

"They mount up to heaven, they go down to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble."

With all these sea-faring men around, her childish grief for her father's shipwreck came back vividly, with the shuddering horror that she had often felt when she had opened *In memoriam* at the words:

> "And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
> Should toss with tangle and with shell."

and she saw herself, once more a little child, on her father's knee, and again lived through the catastrophe that had killed her mother.

During the prayers she grew very conscious, too, of the figure in black widow's weeds that was kneeling so close behind her, and of the shadowy bridal that her imagination saw grouped about the altar. It oppressed her, it dimmed for her even that bright morning.

Then the sermon was all about the dangers of the sea, and the noble work of the Con-

fraternity, in trying to preserve life around our coasts; that also made her feel "eerie." When she stood up to sing the beautiful hymn, "For those in peril on the sea," which is always so touching, everywhere something seemed to choke her utterance. She heard the grand melody ascending in its grave half-tones, but though her heart went deeply with the words, she had no voice to sing:

> "Oh hear us when we cry to Thee
> For those in peril on the sea;"

and Alison, looking at her, and herself also much moved, thought that Jessie had grown from pretty to beautiful.

The service was ended, the organ pealed out the National Anthem, the Brethren dedeparted.

"Mother, may I stay to look at the monuments?" asked Alison, under her voice. "I know Mrs. Pepys is somewhere in here. I'm sure I can come home alone quite safely, it is no distance."

"Very well; but don't be long. Come, Jessie;" and as soon as the crowd had lessened, Mrs. Bayliss and her niece left the Church, went through the Church-yard and reached THE GATE OF THE DEAD.

Whom, or what had they seen? The widow

grasped the girl's arm tightly, and Jessie turning quickly to her aunt, showed lips half-opened in terror and amazement, and eyes wide with a strange, wild questioning.

"You're not well, Auntie!" cried Jessie, drawing her aunt's arm firmly under her own. But her voice sounded strange, hardly like her own. "Let us get home quickly!"

She looked hastily on each side of the crowd there was no face there she recognised —*that face* had vanished.

"The service has tried me very much," said Mary Bayliss, faintly, as they left Seething Lane for Catherine Court. "All this place is too dreadful to me! I ought not to have been forced to come to it! Oh Jessie!" —and she gasped for breath—"I thought —Jessie!—I saw a man so like your father as we were under that gate! and your father was so like my dearest James. It must have been that church! That church where we were married."

"I oughtn't to have gone there—and poor Arthur was there with us, and so was your mother. Why, Jessie, how you are trembling, my dear!"

"Because——" said Jessie, shuddering; "oh, Auntie, Auntie! I saw two eyes—two eyes in the crowd, and they—oh, they brought my

father back to me! Do you think it means that something dreadful has happened to Mac? Is it a sign? Oh Auntie, Auntie, make haste home! I feel as if I should drop down dead."

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT KILLED HER?"

"BEAUTIES are frauds! I've seen Mrs. Pepys, and she isn't half as pretty as Jessie!" exclaimed Alison, bursting into the dining-room, in a great state of excitement, about a quarter of an hour after the others had returned.

Alison had seen no ghost, there was no terror in her grey eyes, she had had a few minutes alone among the monuments of the church, and a delightful little walk home all by herself, and was looking and feeling radiantly blissful as she pushed open the door, when her glance falling upon Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie, who were huddled up together in a corner of the sofa, her face suddenly changed.

"What's happened?" she asked, a dread of evil tidings rushing over her heart.

"We don't know; we've been frightened," cried Jessie, her voice and face still quivering with terror.

"Frightened? Nearly run over? You're not hurt are you?" asked Alison.

"No—no—oh, Alie, we saw—both of us saw—some one with eyes just like my father's!"

"*Jessie!*" exclaimed Alison, with a start, and then she paused and looked very grave.

"That's strange!" she said, presently, "that's very strange! for the other day—I didn't like to speak of it, but I've thought of it several times—the day I went through Mincing Lane by myself—I heard a voice that distinctly recalled to me my own father's!"

"*Your* father's!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss, with a stress of horror on the pronoun.

"Yes, and it startled me, for my mind was just then full of the City," said Alison.

"There was a strong family-likeness between the brothers, especially their voices," said Mrs. Bayliss with a shiver.

"Ah well," said Alison, trying to turn off the subject, "I suppose it was only a fancy or a coincidence; of course it couldn't have been anything else, only it's strange it should have occurred to us all. I'm very sorry you have both been so upset. Come up to the table and try to take some lunch; here's some claret to begin with," and she poured out a couple of glasses.

"I feel better now you've come home to take care of us, Alie," said Jessie, holding out her hand to her cousin; "but I'm afraid I shall lead you a dreadful life; I shan't be able even to go up and down stairs by myself now. I feel sure something must have happened in Scotland! It must be a sign!"

"How can you encourage yourself in such silly fancies," said Alison. "Really, Jessie, you ought to know better."

"Ah, it's all very fine for you, you haven't had your nerves ruined as mine have been!" said Jessie, looking up with her beautiful frightened eyes at Alison's firm figure.

It was for the time very firm, as she was conscious that she had those two others to reassure and protect; for them she would have faced any number of ghosts or burglars.

"Well, never mind," said Alison, "come up stairs now and take your hat and jacket off properly."

"'Properly!' The idea of Alison's talking about doing anything properly!" said Jessie, with an attempt to laugh off her fright; which indeed was rapidly giving way before Alison's calm, protecting presence. "Don't you want taking care of, Auntie? Won't you be frightened to be left alone?"

"Frightened!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss,

with a sudden intensity of feeling; "frightened! No! I'd give—what would I not give to see the faintest shadow of my darling again?—and his brother was so much like him! Go, Jessie, dear child; I'd sooner be alone."

And when she was alone she tried her hardest to see her husband, but no effort of will, or love, or imagination would bring him back; there was no faint shadow of him in any corner of that room; he was gone too immeasurably far away.

During the remainder of the day, Jessie refused to be parted at all from Alison, she also refused to go with her into the Tower Gardens, although Alison wanted very much to count if there really were the twelve towers mentioned in the books. So they spent a couple of hours on the wonderful piece of greensward in front of the Trinity House, where they sat under the trees at work.

"And where," said Jessie, "the sun shines too brightly, and the nice little children play too merrily, for one to feel eerie by any possibility. But you're not to read, Alison, you understand, I can't have you reading; you must bring out your work and talk to me," said Jessie.

It was late at night before Mrs. Bayliss had

any opportunity of conversing with her brother, for he dined that evening with the clothworkers.

He had stayed later than usual in the office, and had only left himself time to dress; so that he had gone out without hearing of the incident which had so startled his relatives.

Mary, determined to be much alone that even ing, sent off the girls at their usual early hour.

When they were gone, the room seemed very desolate. But to Mary Bayliss desolation had become a sort of luxury.

She sat in the same room in which we first saw her brother, John Harbuckle.

The same argand burner, now adorned with a new crimson silk shade and fringe, that had thrown a disk of light on to "the few lines" he had been writing to his antiquarian friend, now illuminated the Bible that lay open before his sister. She was not reading that Bible, for although she believed that she had opened it to read, she had in reality placed it there as a sort of charm. She would not have shrunk from going through Hades in search of her James Bayliss, but she would have tried to take her Bible with her as a protection.

Was she superstitious? Had you asked her the question she would have answered indignantly that she was perhaps the least

superstitious woman in all the world. She was not at all conscious that she was using the Bible as a charm, or an amulet, but the book being there she felt protected by it; although she would stoutly have denied that she required any protection.

"Come! Come! Only come! If you would but come! Come, only come! Only let me know that you are here! Only let me know that you feel I was good to you! Ah! Once I did—once I said—I was unkind"—and then, with bitter self-reproaches, she confessed many a little word or act that still rankled in her memory.

But he never came, nor made any sign. The night breeze through the open window stirred the leaves of the sacred Book; the old-fashioned clock, with a roof like a pagoda, ticked sharply on the mantelpiece; the widow peered into the dim corners with eyes whose tears had all been shed long ago, but there was nothing; he never came!

And yet the face that had flashed across her that very day as she stood under the Gate of The Dead, that face had brought him back to her!

Ever since she had seen it she had been imploring for another sight of it!

In the bright sunshine, at mid-day, she had

seen that face—that face, not his, but so like his, and now in the still night it would not come!

It is difficult to recall the faces of those whom we best know and love. We pass a stranger in the street, we are struck with some peculiarity, we remember it for ever. But the familiar face that has gone, how shall we bring it back? Out of the thousand expressions we have seen it wear which shall we dwell upon? we are bewildered, we know not where to fix our thought; we have watched it from youth to age, from health to sickness, perhaps to death—it is no longer one, it is a panorama of faces, it is years—a life—a life merged into our own and yet—gone. We cannot understand it. It is a mystery; but, oh for a sight of the vanished face once more!

"Come! Come, in any form, only come!" But there was no response; she sat alone, breaking her heart, until at length her brother's slow step was heard on the landing, and he opened the door.

"All alone, Mary!" John Harbuckle exclaimed, looking round the room.

"Yes, John, all alone," echoed the widow, with a sigh.

"I thought the girls would be up," said John, as if slightly disappointed. "Here's

the Company's box of sweets for them. Never mind, the morning will be time enough for me to give it them. You seem very tired, Mary, so am I; I think I'll say good night, my dear."

"I am not more tired than usual," returned Mary, "but, I've something to tell you."

John Harbuckle took one of the large arm-chairs which were now in general use, and leaned back in it.

Mary turned towards him:

'You know we all went to St. Olave's with the Trinity Brethren," she began. "Alison stayed behind us a few minutes to look at the monuments; and as Jessie and I were coming out, just as we were under that old gate, we both of us saw a face in the crowd that reminded us of James's poor brother Arthur, Jessie's father. Jessie was terribly frightened, poor child; she said, 'she saw two eyes in the crowd that brought her father back to her;' they brought my James back to me."

"Strange!" muttered John Harbuckle.

"Strange! That's what Alison said when we told her. She, too, turned grave all at once, and said she had been startled by a voice that recalled her own father's."

"To-day?" asked John, with hardly his usual deliberation.

"No, when she went down Mincing Lane, last week."

John Harbuckle opened his eyes wide:

"And the face you saw?" he asked, as if cross-examining a witness.

"I only saw it for an instant in the crowd. It was not exactly like either James or Arthur, but it recalled them both. Jessie's term was the right one. It brought them both back to me. They were very much alike."

"Strange!" repeated John, as if preoccupied; "very strange!" He was silent for a few moments.

"Mary," he said, with profound gravity, after a long pause, "I also have something to tell you. On the evening I wrote the letter that brought you all here, I walked for some considerable time in the Tower Gardens, thinking of other days, and of those who had lived in them. Perhaps I had been dwelling on certain memories too long and too seriously —perhaps I was haunted by the voices of those who had much to do in making my life what it is; but, however that may be, when I left the Gardens to post a letter that I had suddenly remembered was in my pocket, I passed a cab, over there by St. Catherine's Docks, the wheel of which cab was locked within the wheel of a heavy van. A man

called out of the cab to the driver! Mary —if Arthur Bayliss had not been, to the best of my belief, at the bottom of the sea I would have sworn to that voice! It is one I can never forget."

"John!" exclaimed Mary Bayliss, grasping the edge of the table, and leaning with painful eagerness towards her brother; "John!"

"I could have sworn to that voice!" repeated John Harbuckle, emphatically.

"What can it mean?" gasped Mary.

"Had they any relatives—cousins, for instance?" asked John.

"There were but two brothers, and their father was an only son, an only child, indeed."

"If it's a mere coincidence it is certainly a strange one," said John, slowly.

"*If* it's a coincidence! If it isn't, what is it?"

"Ah!——" with a long sigh John Harbuckle put his elbow on the arm of the chair and leaned his head upon his hand for a while.

Mary sat opposite, peering keenly into his face as if to read his thoughts.

"Did a doubt about Arthur Bayliss's death ever cross your mind?" John asked, at length, very slowly and solemnly.

"I never doubted but that he was really dead," replied Mary without hesitation; but

both her tone and her words prompted John to say, with almost judicial severity:

"You had a doubt. What was it you doubted?"

She did not answer readily. The clock struck the hour as fast as it could, as if in a hurry to get it over.

"What was it you doubted?" John asked, with slow but incisive utterance, and he turned more directly towards his sister.

"I don't know. The whole affair was strange," she answered, hardly avoiding his gaze, but not positively meeting it.

"True! It was strange; very strange things happen every day," said John, as if to himself. "But your specific doubt, Mary? you never doubted his death; what then did you doubt?" he went on, with a return of his keen, scrutinising tone, as he fixed his clear eyes on his sister.

"I never doubted but that poor Jessie was a widow," returned Mary. "But since I've been a widow myself I've known that it was not a widow's grief that killed her."

"Then what did kill her?—for killed she was!" said John, and indignation as well as grief might have been detected under his quiet words.

"Remorse!" said Mary, in her deepest tone.

"Remorse!" exclaimed John Harbuckle, suddenly starting into an upright position. "Absurd! Nonsense! Rubbish! Sickly dreaming! Remorse? What could the poor thing have done to cause her remorse? She was—she—she—she was good—yes she was, Mary; she was good—good and conscientious!"

"So conscientious that her conscience killed her, poor dear!" said Mary.

"I can't understand that," said John.

"Neither can I, but I am persuaded that so it was," said his sister.

"Your reasons, Mary?"

"You saw her once or twice after the news of Arthur's death had come. Was there not something about her unlike a widow's grief?"

"Aye, there was!" muttered John, the look of horror with which she had recoiled from him when he had for the second time asked her to be his wife, rising before his mind.

"What was it?" asked Mary.

"Monomania. Grief had turned her brain."

"*Grief*—yes, and something besides grief! Heaven knows how bitterly I've reproached myself over and over again for many a thoughtless, unkind word to my James!" Mary went on, her self-control deserting her all at once. "Many and many a night I have

wept for hours over words and deeds I'd give my life to recall! I know how madly one reproaches oneself! one never can be kind enough to satisfy one's own conscience; but, oh John, to-night as I have been thinking of it all, I feel I am beginning to think that there must have been some terrible secret, some great wrong somewhere! Poor Jessie, whatever it was, it killed her!"

"You admit she was in a morbid state of mind?"

"Of course. There can't be a doubt about it, but still—but still——"

"Such a state of mind is invariably accompanied by an exaggerated estimate of everything. You must give that consideration its due weight."

"I do; but the more I think of it, the more I am convinced that there was a secret—a terrible secret—and that that secret killed poor Jessie!"

"Poor thing! Well, thank God, she is at peace now!"—he paused. "If there was a wrong it must have been with him, not with her," he went on, then paused again. "She was fond of him?"

He asked the question with a pang of the old jealousy.

"Devotedly."

"He was good to her?"

"They seemed a model pair."

"There were money troubles." This was no question, but an affirmation.

"Yes, and it would appear as if he were running away from his creditors when he went down in the 'Mellacurrie.'"

"A sad affair altogether! I never quite understood it," said John. "I never saw much of him, but I always heard of him as an honourable man of business, whose misfortunes were not of his own making; but men do strange things when they are driven into a corner. I can hardly think that he can be living after all these years of silence. Good night, Mary." And John Harbuckle rose abruptly and went off to his own room.

CHAPTER IV.

"OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT."

"IT'S the mystery, my dear," Mrs. Tildesley of "Crow's Nest," Lambrooke, had oracularly observed to her husband, after Arnold Birkett's first visit.

But, whatever that mystery may have been, it did not prevent Mr. and Mrs. Tildesley from taking a deep and kindly interest in their new friend and his affairs.

Arnold Birkett seemed for a while quite content to follow their advice, so, after much consultation with the husband, he took offices in that newly erected block of buildings, Fenchurch Avenue, Fenchurch Street; and, following Mrs. Tildesley's advice, rooms in Hawthorne Cottage, a picturesque little dwelling within half-a-mile of "Crow's Nest," and not by any means expensive.

"I am throwing nearly all my capital into my business venture," he said to Mrs. Tildesley, when he consulted her about his leaving the Bridgewater; "and as I'm quite alone

and don't care for personal extravagance, a quiet little place would suit me best."

So she found him Hawthorne Cottage. These arrangements having been made, Arnold Birkett plunged every morning boldly, into the mighty rushing stream of City life, and every evening did his best to rest on his chosen little bit of that stream's quiet suburban banks.

Arnold Birkett came down to live at Hawthorne Cottage in the most unobtrusive way possible, but strange to relate he had not been there many weeks before, quite unconsciously, he had caused something amounting to a stir in Lambrooke; so much so, that it was soon currently reported that, although no longer young, he was running both the curate and the new doctor very close in the interest he had awakened in the local mind; indeed his public was soon a wider one than that dominated by either of the just named professional men.

The old rector and his set were interested in him because he held the orthodox views of a good long while ago, except on the subject of African Missions, which exception formed excellent debating ground and prevented the monotony of continual acquiescence; the doctor found him intelligent on fevers and the

diseases of the natives; young Tildesley, who lived in one of the turnings off the Lambrooke Road, appreciated his cigars; the men in general found him a pleasant companion and, for Lambrooke, an uncommonly good talker; the women gave him their sympathy, feeling that he was neither well nor happy; the girls declared that he had still fine eyes and a pathetic tenor voice; moreover, it is said (but I hold it to be a libel invented and circulated by a wretched man, whom jealousy had rendered malicious) that some of the unmarried women declared it was too bad of Mrs. Tildesley to allow no one but herself to play Mr. Birkett's accompaniments.

A "small beer chronicle," extending over many pages, might very well come in here, but as any dweller in the suburbs can supply it out of his or her own experience, why should I spend my valuable time upon it? I have said enough to show that had Arnold Birkett been anxious to become a popular man, he could very easily have attained such distinction in the neighbourhood of Lambrooke.

Arnold Birkett, however, cared but little for social success. He accepted it as a right and as a thing to which he had always been accustomed. He was soon intimate with men in every way more desirable than Mr.

Tildesley ; but he always gave his first friend the preference.

Many residents in Lambrooke competed for the honour of entertaining him, but his fidelity to Mrs. Tildesley remained unswerving ; and she deserved his constancy, she was a very nice woman and took a deep interest in him and his mystery.

When Arnold Birkett had first gone into the City, on his return from Africa, he had often wished that his offices were further away from the Tower Gardens than they were, but he soon grew used to its position, and that too-well remembered place ceased to have any particular interest for him. Fenchurch Avenue, that brand span new locality, was so altogether different from any street or lane that had ever existed in the City in his earlier days, that it was at times difficult for him, when there, to believe he was in London at all. In fact, what with the novelty of his surroundings, and the anxiety and excitement of his new venture, he had little time during business hours for unpleasant reflections.

It was after business was over, when at the station, he saw crowds of men hurrying away, laden with small luxuries for home consumption ; it was when he heard them chatting about wives and children, when going along

the Lambrooke Road, he often saw them fondly welcomed back after their day's work; it was then he sometimes wished that the earth would open and swallow him up. He never took back anything for himself to Hawthorne Cottage. When he returned he generally lay on the sofa with his face to the wall for half an hour or more, weary, miserable, and alone.

* * * * *

Trinity Monday was a fine day. It had been bright even among the City lanes, it was brighter in the purer air of Lambrooke.

On Trinity Monday Arnold Birkett returned from Town rather earlier than usual. He was not feeling well; his day in the City had fatigued him very much, and had been extremely exciting to him. So instead of walking back to the cottage, he mounted the local omnibus.

In the state of health he was in just then, anything would have made him melancholy. Doubtless, if he had then had the most loving wife, he would have said or done something to make her wretched five minutes after his arrival at home. He knew perfectly well what was the matter with him, but that did not prevent his being hurt when he saw the wife of

the owner of "Inglenook" meet her husband in a front garden where thousands of forget-me-nots were blooming in the borders; nor from feeling half choked when he noticed many children's small fingers drumming on the nursery windows of "Plinlimmon" to their father, as he descended from the top of the omnibus at his own gate. Little knew the owners of the chubby fingers how they were also drumming on the heart of one of their father's fellow passengers!

Arnold Birkett was suffering from what he called "an attack," although in a far milder one than the illness at the Tavistock. He was paying the penalty that most Englishmen have to pay for a few years' residence in the tropics. Nothing on earth could have given him pleasure; but the quiet domesticity he witnessed and imagined, filled him with envy and made him worse.

"The only comfort is," he said to himself, "it can't last much longer. I was a fool to come back at all. I wish that last fever had killed me. The sooner it's all over the better!"

He lay down on the sofa in his little sitting-room, as soon as he reached the Cottage, and tried to sleep but could not. He had been ill and out of temper all day, every trifle had

annoyed him; several things that were not trifles had occurred; they preyed on his mind, he could not get rid of them; he could not get rid of the City, he had brought it home with him; he seemed still to be hurrying along its streets and lanes. He turned his face to the wall, but the past day would not be shut out; he was so tired and ill, it was a misery to him to have to move or think, but rest would not come. After a while the scene in front of the grim old Gate of The Dead separated itself from the crowd of other scenes that thronged his mind. He had walked from his office in Fenchurch Avenue, to Tower Street, by Mark Lane, Hart Street, and Seething Lane; an affair not of much importance but of an annoying nature had made him take that route, that annoying affair had occupied all his thought at the time.

As he had passed the Church-yard gate his eyes and brain had received the impression of what he had seen, but at the time he was too much irritated to take any particular notice of anything, as he had hastily glanced up and then hurried through the crowd.

The special cause of the annoyance was gone now. As Arnold Birkett lay on the sofa with his face to the wall the scene rose vividly

before him, bright, clear, full of life and sunshine. It had a strange fascination for him; and, in his mind, it was accompanied by a sort of shadow in which there were the same grim gateway, and a blurred and misty crowd; but in the bright fresh picture he had seen that day there was a widow and in its shadow the remembrance of a *bride.*

Thinking of these scenes at last he fell asleep. It was the cool of the evening when he awoke. He felt better, turned round to the lonely room, hated the sight of it, resolved to go and smoke a cigar with Tildesley, and to talk over one or two things while so doing.

Abroad, he and the few Europeans near him had been in the habit of "meeting up" of an evening. He was used to society of an evening and did not feel right without it.

He went down the broad suburban road to "Crow's Nest." It was a lovely sunset; he found the Tildesleys sitting out on the lawn, and stayed there talking, until it grew dusk, then they went in and there was the usual little bit of music.

Arnold Birkett had always a pathetic tenor; that evening, as he sang a well-known ballad

to Mrs. Tildesley's accompaniment, his voice was absolutely full of tears. Nothing could have sounded more heart-broken than his refrain :

"Thy face I never see.
Thy face I never see."

Mrs. Tildesley, kind woman, felt very sorry for him, and afterwards remarked to herself that it was highly creditable to him and a thing you don't often meet with, to find a man mourning for a wife who had been dead nearly eight years. She wished very much to speak her mind to her husband on the subject, but forbore. She was a prudent woman—Mr. Tildesley had proposed to her about four months after his first wife's decease.

Mrs. Tildesley's feelings having been aroused by Arnold Birkett's harrowing ballad and tearful voice, followed him by the song perhaps the most capable to stirring up the past of any ever written.

Her voice was good and well trained, but now much of it had gone, and she had the sense to know it had gone. She sang nothing but the simplest songs ; but she gave them with a very distinct articulation and with much simplicity.

Arnold Birkett heard every one of the well-known words she sang ; they and their lovely

melody haunted him, and came only too true that very evening:

"Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me.
The smiles, the tears of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken.
Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond mem'ry brings the light
Of other days around me."

Returning to Hawthorne Cottage that "stilly night," "the light of other days" falling full on his life as the moonbeams on the quiet gardens by the road side, the scene in the City Lane came back to him once more; but now all was vague and shadowy except one face beneath the dim old portal—a girl's face it was that grew to him each moment, brighter, sweeter, more real—it was the *face of Jessie Bayliss.*

CHAPTER V.

RETRIBUTION.

ARNOLD BIRKETT'S temper was subject to violent alternations. On the Trinity Monday it had been simply dreadful. Early in the morning, having no one else to insult and abuse, he had cursed himself and his fate very freely. During that day the veriest trifles had irritated him almost beyond endurance; it seemed that everybody insulted him; everything annoyed him; the whole arrangement of the world at large was devised on purpose to spite him; the universe itself owed him a grudge and was letting him know it.

"Life's too hard; everything's against me!"

After that song and the quiet walk in the "stilly night," this irritation gave way to a profound yet gentle melancholy. Going up to town in the morning, he listened with so sympathizing an expression to a tale of woe, that the narrator was emboldened to ask for a subscription, and got it at once. No trifles

annoyed him that day, he was very sorry for anyone who was in trouble.

He was, however, in no frame of mind for business. Had he been left to himself he might perhaps have done absolutely nothing for the whole morning. But while he was sitting at his desk, with his head buried in his hands, one of Mr. Tildesley's clerks came in with an exciting message. An article of colonial produce, that had been gradually rising in the market, was moving up rapidly; the rest of that day, until five o'clock, Arnold Birkett spent in rushing after it, amidst a crowd of eager buyers. The beautiful young face that had come to him in "the stilly night" was driven out of his thoughts, until what seemed to him a sufficient quantity of that article had, with much difficulty, been caught and bought.

Arnold Birkett may possibly, have seen enough of Mr. Tildesley during that day's chase; certain it is that he did not return with him to Lambrooke by his usual train. Certain it also is that when business was over, he called the care-taker of the house in Fenchurch Avenue into his office and had a long talk with him; which resulted in their both going upstairs and looking at a couple of very good unfurnished rooms at the top of the house.

"Plenty of light and air here," he remarked. "Well, I'll think of these rooms. It's a long way down to Lambrooke if one is detained in town or if one wants to go to the theatre. I'll think of these rooms. They'll be let reasonably, I suppose, they're too far up for business purposes, and no one makes a home of the City now."

He went down to his office again, wrote a few letters and then left the place.

The great blocks of offices were all closed when he left the Avenue traffic was still going on in Fenchurch Street and the main thoroughfares, but the lanes were deserted.

Arnold Birkett passed the gate-way of St. Olave's; it was closed. The crowd was gone; the street was empty, the black skulls stared vacantly at the gigantic rainbow-hued letters which, on the high dead wall opposite, announced a popular play.*

He paused an instant, then went through Catherine Court and so on to Tower Hill.

By Barking Alley he found the old crossing sweeper just preparing to leave for home, like the rest of the City people. A few bonded carmen were still at work on the raised level

*At the time this was written, facing the Gate of the Dead was the one word "YOUTH."

It was a grim contrast.

before the block of warehouses, but for most, even of them, the day's toil was over.

Arnold Birkett felt that he had no right to be there at such an hour. He, like everyone else, ought to be at home or at least going home. Why was he different from everyone else?—why was he not going home? Simply because he had no home to go to. He could not think of Hawthorne Cottage as home. There was no beloved being there to turn his rooms into his home.

He went up to the crossing sweeper and gave her a shilling. Her face beamed with delight and recognition as she curtseyed low.

"There's ladies come to Mr. Harbuckle's now, sir," she said, in her ghost of a voice.

"Indeed! How many?"

"Three, sir. One which I wouldn't like to say she were igxactly old, and two of the nicest young ladies I iver see."

"I hope they remember you sometimes," said Mr. Birkett.

"Bless their pretty faces! they do, sir," she exclaimed with a benign smile; "an' I pray to all the Saints for em' ivery night, sir, as I've been a doing for you, sir, since I last saw you. But it's been a bad day for me intoirely this; folks thinks when it's fine me and me poor childer don't want nothing; and it's

no tay-leaves nor broken bits, nor nothing I'll get from Mr. Harbuckle's now Mrs. Robbins's gone, spite of the pretty young ladies. Sure if it wasn't for the likes of a gentleman like you coming along now and again, I'd be starved."

"Do you happen to know their names?" asked Mr. Birkett.

The woman shook her head and Mr. Birkett passed on, a shower of murmured benedictions following him; while the sweeper was repeating in her heart a few of the soubriquets, quite unfit for publication, by which Mrs. Robbin's had been in the habit of designating Mrs. Bayliss.

After he had gone some yards, he furtively glanced over his shoulder, and noticing that the sweeper had departed, he recrossed the road and keeping along the footpath that surrounds the gardens of Trinity Square, was soon opposite John Harbuckle's house.

The door was shut, business there as elsewhere was over for the day. He looked up at the windows, no one was to be seen, but fresh flowers in the window-boxes and fresh lace curtains behind them gave the house a certain home-like aspect it had wanted on the April morning when he had last noticed it.

I say "noticed," because he had since then walked by it many times when his mind had

been occupied with other affairs, and when that house had had no particular interest for him.

"That, I suppose, is still the dining-room," he said to himself, looking up earnestly at two open windows on the first floor. "And she, no doubt, is there at this very moment! and I can't see her!—I, to whom she belongs!"

He looked at the windows as if they were mesmerizing him.

"She may be there!" He felt indeed she *must* be there.

"Bitterly, bitterly, I've been punished! Is my punishment to last for ever? Is there never forgiveness? Why may I not see her? Why may I not claim her? Is she not mine? My all—now? All that remains to me of the wreck of my old affections?"

He turned abruptly as if he had wrenched himself away with a terrible effort.

"To be so near, and yet, like a dead man out of sight," he said, as he entered Catherine Court, in which there was then no one else.

He walked up and down for some time in great agitation:

"Ah!" he said; "it's a frightful thing to come back from the dead! What shall I do? What can I do? *Now*, she thinks of me as a saint with her mother in heaven! How can I tell her all, poor child? Why did I return?

Shall I go to John Harbuckle and tell him all? I can't! He's too good to enjoy the triumph, but I can't! I couldn't face him! He could forgive me for wronging him, but never for so hurting her! Impossible! I meant to have taken more time to have tried to put myself right with the world first!—Shall I go back to Lambrooke? Ah! that old house, and the worn steps, and her little feet! The door-way where she used to watch for me of an evening when all was quiet as it is now! *She* would have welcomed me! *She* would have forgiven me, without one reproach!—*She* loved me better than her life, and I killed her! I deserve my fate! Why should I break in upon the happiness of those others! They are happy enough! Oh yes, they are happy; everyone is happy except me! They have mourned, but they are comforted by this time! Why should I go and trouble them? Let the dead past bury its dead, and me along with the rest!"

After he had taken many a turn up and down the court, always looking along Tower Hill each time he came to the entrance under the worn iron-work, he perceived that he had attracted the notice of a policeman. He paused somewhere in the middle of the court and debated for a moment, whether he should

leave it by the Seething Lane gateway and return to Lambrooke, or whether he should continue watching John Harbuckle's house.

"I must see her," he decided. "It's a sweet evening; between now and nine o'clock they are sure to come out. I must see her face once more, if but for a moment."

He passed John Harbuckle's house again, again looked up at the windows. No one was to been seen. No sound of voices from within could reach him. He went on under the shade of the plane trees, of which the leaves were fluttering gently in the warm western glow, until he came to the gate of the square gardens, where he stopped for some time. Then he came back again, and then again returned to the gate. Not a creature was to be seen in the gardens If he could only have been permitted to enter and wait on that sunlighted velvety turf the lengthening shadows were crossing! Surely in all Europe there can be no City so selfishly arranged as is London! London is essentially a town for people who have homes, woe be to the wanderers there! There were plenty of seats within the gardens both of the square and the Tower, but they were reserved for those who had homes and chairs and sofas near at hand. Arnold Birkett, and doubtless many others, would have been

thankful for the humblest bench outside the railings, but of course there was none; had there been, it is probable that some of the men who were spending their evening (after a long day's toil on the wharves) standing at the corners of the City lanes or at the bars of public houses, might have taken that bench, which would have been very undesirable. Oh, cruel London town! There was consequently nothing for Arnold Birkett to do but prowl about the square and in and out its courts in the least obtrusive manner he could. This is a difficult task when it extends over an hour and a half. It was past eight when he at length saw the long-watched door open, and John Harbuckle follow the two girls down the steps.

Only a elderly man with a slow step, and two girls, simply clad in something soft and grey, but after one glimpse of them the houses and trees met before Arnold Birkett's eyes and shut them out again, and then opened, disclosing them, blurred and indistinct. They sauntered in the direction of the Tower. He followed them afar off. They entered the gardens by the gate opposite the bonded warehouses. They went to the bench under the acacias and were lost to Birkett among the trees.

"It is remarkably beautiful this evening,"

observed John Harbuckle, gazing with calm contented pleasure and affection on the ramparts and houses by the Beauchamp Tower. "Nothing can be finer! I have advised Mr. Woolcomb's son to make an etching of it from this point of view. He says he will, but has not done so yet."

"Yes, it's beautiful; but don't stay to look at it, please, uncle John," said Jessie, uneasily. "I know it was over there they cut off Anne Boleyn's head. And Alison says some prisoner used to sit by that little slit in the wall and watch the river; and Lady Jane Grey's husband used to walk on the leads of that Beauchamp Tower; and his brother, who married Amy Robsart, was in prison there! Come away! I don't like those things, they make me feel eerie. Let us walk up and down, or go round to the lawn opposite the Mint; I like the docks and the lawn better!"

If Jessie had but seen the eyes that were peering with such painful eagerness through the bushes in search of her face!

John Harbuckle and the girls strolled on slowly along the walk above the moat. Arnold Birkett noticed them moving, and followed them by the path outside the railings. Between them was a deep slope with trees and bushes now in full leaf.

He watched them; they strolled along as leisurely as if by the Birren water, instead of by that ever-flowing stream of London life that was within so few yards of them.

Presently, through a gap among the shrubs, he saw them all distinctly; and then, for the moment, all around them grew blurred and dark again, the three figures looked to him taller than the White Tower itself, then faded and reappeared.

"Which is she?" he asked himself, and forgetting all else, even his caution, he looked eagerly towards them.

Just then John Harbuckle stopped, raised his hand, and pointed to the one round turret of the White Tower.

They all turned away from the eyes that were watching them, and faced the great pile beyond the moat. All those eyes could see were two plaits of brown hair under two grey hats.

The last rays of the sun were filling the back windows of the brick houses on the historic Green with burning panes, and lighting up the crowns and pennants of the vanes of the four turrets to most pure gold, and covering the turrets themselves with a bloom like the bloom of damsons. The elderly man in black, the girls in grey, stood almost as still as the glorified buildings.

Did nothing tell John Harbuckle and those girls who was so near? Nothing! He was far from the thoughts of all of them.

John Harbuckle, pointing to the round north east turret, began to relate, in his somewhat prosy way, the sad story of a now nearly forgotten heroine, Matilda Fitzwalter, of Castle Baynard, who was imprisoned in that same round turret, where, says tradition, she was poisoned, by order of King John, for being brave and virtuous.

As he talked they all went into a summer-house facing the Devereux Tower, at the north-west angle of the inner ward, where the path turns sharply.

They were lost again to the watcher; it filled him with despair:

"Am I never to see her?" he said, looking down to the roof of the summer-house, over which a weeping ash projected like a fan. Beyond was the moat and a great bastion, grim with weather-staines, on which paced a sentry, seen now and again between the battlements, behind the battlements stood the grey tower where Elizabeth's Essex once was captive. It was all nothing to Arnold Birkett. He only knew Jessie was hidden from him.

"I shall certainly go down Thames Street and look up Castle Baynard," said Alison, as

John Harbuckle concluded his narrative. "I think I might get a little paper out of that. Wasn't it splendid that her father was the first baron to sign the Magna Charta? Serve King John right!"

"Is is true that King John was all day signing his name?" asked Jessie, with a sort of childish simplicity she affected on these matters; "because I've been told he was; and I've seen a friend of mine play at it. It was very amusing—my friend was, I mean."

"*You* are very amusing!" said John Harbuckle, with a pronounced smile.

"King John's been white-washed, you know!" he went on; "but I prefer my history in its traditional form, I like my heroes white and my villains black. They buried her at Little Dunmow, in Essex. They put a recumbent statue on her tomb and painted the finger-tips red, as a sign she died of poison."

"Oh, uncle John, is it true that people's finger-tips turn red when they are poisoned?" asked Jessie, deeply interested in this last detail.

("Are they never coming out!" thought Arnold Birkett, to whom the waiting had now become an absolute torture. "Am I never to see her?")

"Is it true?" said John Harbuckle. "Why, Jessie, you're as bad as the children with the fairy tales! Never spoil a good tradition, child, by asking if it's true! Always accept it in all its details."

"Well, but I suppose I may ask—I may wonder, mayn't I—whether she were so extraordinarily lovely after all?"

"A simple, round-faced country girl she looks in effigy, with her hood and wimple hiding all her hair. Now I hold, with St. Paul, that a woman's hair is her glory," said John Harbuckle.

"Oh, beauties are frauds!" said Alison. "Confess, uncle John, you never saw one!"

"Indeed, Alison, I can confess no such thing."

"Oh, dear uncle John, that *is* good of you!" cried Jessie, with enthusiasm.

"When I was a young man, girls, all girls, used to seem to me most beautiful and wonderful creatures!" said the old bachelor.

"Oh, uncle John, how sad to think they've now grown common-place!" exclaimed Jessie, who was becoming more and more interested in this subject.

"Common-place! No Jessie! *Now*, I think girls, that is, *nice* girls—"

"Like Alison and me, for instance—"

"That is, nice girls," continued John Harbuckle, with a deepening smile, "are much more beautiful and much more wonderful!"

"Oh, but not *really?*" asked Jessie, with delight and wonder, and then she laughed.

Arnold Birkett heard her, for at the moment there was a lull in the shrill hooting of the street children.

"Good God! Her mother's laugh! Let me go—don't let me stop that happy laughter!" he felt; but he could not stir from the spot.

"I mean it, really, Jessie!" returned John Harbuckle,

"That is very charming! I'm so pleased!" said Jessie, the brightness of her smiling eyes dimming with a soft haze as she, with a slight blush, turned away from the others and gazed dreamily over the moat to the lights glowing in the dark embrasures of the bastion opposite.

"Am *I* beautiful and wonderful to Mac Carruthers, I wonder? Surely I can't *be really* beautiful!—I'm only pretty. But perhaps—perhaps!—Ah! It would be very nice if Mac were here! Poor Mac! I wonder—I wonder very much—I should like to know how much I would give if I could only know that Mac is really as fond of me as he says he is. Can

he think me really very beautiful and wonderful? Imagine anyone's thinking me wonderful! Perhaps Mac does! "

Arnold Birkett, standing without, saw a small street arab take up a stone and aim it at the summer-house; he could have stopped him but he did not.

That stone brought them all out. They looked up to the railings, but the rascal was gone. Arnold Birkett had stepped back a foot or two; they could not see him, a couple of day labourers hid him from them: but he, looking down, saw distinctly, and knew which was Jessie:

"Her mother! Her mother over again! Her mother—and *me!*"

His heart cried out to her to come to him. She never heard it.

She and her companions turned and went on their quiet way along the Tower Gardens.

He saw Jessie look up into John Harbuckle's face and smile, as she spoke words he himself could not hear. That, too, was hard to bear.

"It is my due, my punishment!" said the watcher. "I took away his Jessie from him; now he has mine!"

He followed along the upper path outside the rails; the others were many feet below.

He followed them until the sloping bank between them grew narrower.

Should he, having seen her, having known she was safe and happy, go back to Africa, leaving her in peace to cherish his memory as doubtless she now cherished it?

Would she be happier if she saw him? Should he bring her misery? Should he wait for John Harbuckle and tell him all? The impulse to make himself known balanced so evenly the impulse to slink away and hide himself for ever, what could he do? And yet he followed them, with his eyes never moving from Jessie.

The little group paused again for a few minutes just past the fragments of old London Wall that support a very common-place pump. It is exactly opposite Liquor Tea Warehouse, at the entrance to Postern Row; it marks the eastern boundary of the City. In old maps you may find a postern gate there: and beyond the open country.

The pump formed a screen for Arnold Birkett. He stopped and, looking on, saw, on a sudden, a little scene for which none of them was prepared.

A young man, in a brown tweed suit, sprang quickly across the road from the opposite path of Trinity Square, and, dashing past him,

halted a few feet further on, exactly opposite the little group Arnold Birkett was watching.

The young man caught hold of the railings and gave a whistle.

The sloping bank of the Tower Gardens was narrower at that point, it was but a few feet below the road.

Jessie turned round sharply. Arnold Birkett saw her face change—grow radiant. "Mac! Mac!" he heard her cry.

"Can't I come to you? Where's the gate?" exclaimed an eager voice, young and manly.

"Oh, Mac! How did you come? I can't believe it's you! How did you come?"

"I just came by the London and North Western," returned Mac. "I say! I must get in! Where's the gate? I've news!—news! —news!"

"Up there! up there! keep along by the railings. Uncle John, the key! I'm coming, Mac! Keep along by the railings! I'm coming!"

And Arnold Birkett, standing there, saw the young man hurrying along by the upper path and Jessie by the lower.

The path diverged. Mac and Jessie had to move at every step further apart before they could meet at that gate by the Dock House, near which John Harbuckle had heard the

voice of the man in the cab on the seventh of April.

Arnold Birkett watched them; he saw John Harbuckle watching them too; he saw Alison take her uncle's arm; but the meeting of Mac and Jessie was hidden from him by the leafy trees.

Arnold Birkett saw Jessie no more that night.

John Harbuckle and Alison turned, arm in arm, towards the Devereux Tower; Arnold Birkett slunk back again to Lambrooke.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE DOVE'S TWILIGHT TO THE RAVEN'S.

"NO, no, Mac! Come away from here, they'll stone us! they will indeed!" were Jessie's first words, when she had opened the gate of the Tower Gardens to Mac, who at once tried to seize both her hands and would doubtless have kissed her, had she allowed him to do so.

It was the gate by the docks, opposite the Royal Mint, where a guard of soldiers was on duty.

"Stone us! What do you mean?" asked Mac, immediately suppressing all signs of affection, and walking on quickly by Jessie's side.

"I saw them do it the other evening," said Jessie, nervously. "You don't know what the people about here are like! If they see a decently dressed man and woman talking ever so quietly together in these gardens they'll stone them! It enrages them so! Here—here's a little path where they can't see us! We shall

be safe here. Oh Mac!—oh Mac!—you've frightened me a little! Don't you think you should have sent a telegram if you couldn't write? There's an arbour at the end of this walk."

"Darling!—how you're trembling! Take my arm! I've done wrong—forgive me—I wanted to tell you the good news myself, I was jealous even of the wires! Jessie! you *are* all right again now, aren't you?" said Mac, with a curious mixture of anxiety and delight in his tone, as he placed her hand more firmly on his arm.

"Yes, yes! It was only for a moment! I'm all right, and so glad!" said Jessie, in a more natural voice. "I was frightened, Mac; a few days ago aunt and I were frightened, and—I'm so silly, I haven't quite got over it. Your note this morning was so miserable. Nothing told me you were coming, and yet I've been thinking of you all day."

"You have? Bless you for it! I didn't myself know I was coming until this morning. Then I felt I must be my own messenger, I couldn't let anything else tell you. Jessie—I've got an appointment! At last I've got something to do."

"Mac!"

Mac felt that after all he had been right in

telling her himself. He was sure that as long as memory lasted he should never forget her face, her voice, as she uttered that one short word, it was to last for ever.

"Jessie!—it's true, darling!"

Then he could not for a moment speak another syllable; neither could she.

They took a few steps in silence.

"What is it?" presently Jessie asked, as if it were, as indeed it was to them, a very solemn question.

"It's Alec's doing. Alec has been blowing my trumpet all round Birrendale; and at last to good—I hope to good—effect. But it's a rather complicated affair; the whole thing I mean. Oh, Jessie, if you only knew how many thousands of years it seems since we parted at that wretched station! If you only knew the blackness, the darkness, the blank emptiness of everything after you were gone!"

"I do know a little," put in Jessie, with a sigh that had as much of pleasure as of pain in it. "You haven't been here, you know!" she added, quaintly.

"And the misery of waiting and waiting, and asking and begging for work, and getting nothing, and feeling as if the world didn't want you and wouldn't let you live—Oh, it's horrible! horrible! Thank God, it's over now!"

"But you're not telling me what it is, dear! About the appointment? Poor Mac, your letter this morning almost made me cry, it did indeed!"

"You sweet child! But I didn't know then —not when I wrote yesterday; I only knew last night—after post time."

"Can't you tell me in three words?" said Jessie, impatiently.

"You remember to have heard of Donaldson of Langdyke; I'm to be his secretary," said Mac, hurriedly.

Jessie, whose fancy during the last few minutes had been soaring mightily, felt rather disappointed. In spite of Mac's excitement, the news when it came fell flat; and Mac knew that it did.

"Secretary! That isn't much, is it?" asked Jessie.

"Well, perhaps not in an ordinary way!" said Mac, slightly hurt; "but there are circumstances that make this a first-rate opening. You see what a young man really wants is an opening; and heaven knows how difficult it is for him to get one! Especially when he has no father to push him on—and when he's failed in his 'exams,' as I have. Alec and I think it's a splendid opening. My uncle does too, I know, and that's the reason he doesn't

like it. This morning, he gave both of us rather more of his mind than we cared to have. I'm not sorry I'm leaving Muirhead, I can tell you. I've had enough of it lately; rather more than enough."

"He doesn't like me: I feel sure he doesn't," said Jessie. "Poor Mac!"

"Poor Mac! not at all!—as if you weren't worth more to me than all, and everybody! I have, however, had a good deal to put up with. Don't let's talk about it!—what does it amount to? But as for Alec, words won't express how good he's been; he has worked for me and no mistake."

Now there was a little circumstance that Mac felt he could not quite honourably discuss with Jessie, and Mac was before all things honourable. It was the reason why Mac's uncle was not so particularly well pleased with him just then. There were indeed two reasons. He begrudged Mac his robust health every time he saw him and Alec together; he did not approve of his impecunious nephew getting engaged to Jessie Bayliss, who had not a farthing, when Mac knew very well that for the asking he might have had the hand of a very charming girl who owned a pleasant estate, not a dozen miles from Muirhead, for the improvement and management of which

Mac seemed to his uncle cut out by nature. And the young heiress—pretty she was too, only Mac persisted in not seeing her beauty—the young heiress had shown signs of a distinct liking for Mac.

It was greatly to Mac's credit that he did not boast of this; but Mac really possessed a deal of proper feeling.

"Alec has worked for me, and no mistake," said Mac. "You remember the Dryfesdales, Jessie? Well, Donaldson of Langdyke is staying with them just now. He came over to Muirhead to dinner with them a few days ago. I was at the Johnstones, fortunately; and Alec and he got talking about one thing and another, and as usual my trumpet was blown tremendously. The consequence was he—Donaldson, I mean—rode over yesterday and settled the matter. I shall have to go back to-morrow. He's very anxious to have me with him at once."

"I'm afraid you won't like it," sighed Jessie.

"Liking has nothing to do with the matter," returned Mac; "I can put my likings in my pocket now I have you to work for. But I rather think I shan't dislike it——"

"Is he young or old?" interrupted Jessie.

"About my own age," said Mac. "Rather older, perhaps."

"And nice?" asked Jessie.

"'Nice,' what a term for a man! He was very considerate and afraid of hurting my feelings, when we had our little talk and settled matters. I, at least, felt so, and was grateful; but Alec, who is sharper than I, put another construction upon his manner when I told him of it."

"I should like to know what it was! What was it?"

"Alec said it was his own feelings not mine he was so tender about. 'What he needs,' said Alec, who really is most uncommonly shrewd sometimes, 'what he needs is not a secretary but a master, that's his only chance. I saw him look strange when I told him you'd saved my life. He has an hereditary failing—he's not a teetotaler; but he has just sense enough to know his danger. I'm sure he recognized you as his master as soon as he saw you. The fact is'—this is what Alec told me—'I put the notion into his head; and there's nothing like putting an idea into a man's head if you want to find it there!' That's what Alec said. Between ourselves, Jessie, I really had wondered at the liberality of his offer, but of course I saw it all at once then; and a most delightful feeling of power came over me. I don't know how it is," Mac went on, his matter of

fact narrative breaking down suddenly, "I don't know how it is, but ever since that day we drove together through the Dale to Allarbie —you and I, Jessie—(can we possibly be the same two?—we can't be!—and yet we must be)—ever since that day, I've felt a different being; I've felt as if I had new powers—I can't make it plain—I'm not a metaphysician —I only know I look back upon my old self, my self that used to be before that wonderful——"

"Wonderful?" echoed Jessie, dreamily, remembering John Harbuckle's remarks, and the thoughts they had awakened.

"Aye! wonderful!" and then came wild, half incoherent words from Mac, and strange happy answers from Jessie.

They sat in a rustic arbour, screened from the road by elder-bushes. An arbour as rustic as if the ebbing tide of the great City's traffic were not sounding all around them, as like the noise of the Birren on a calm evening as could be. The brick tower at the north-east angle of the wall, in which Raleigh had shivered through the bitter winters, looked down upon them; all was unheeded—they only knew they were together—and together looking forward to a long bright future to be spent together. Together! Always they

were to be together; always that refrain they had heard on the road through Birrendale to Allarbie was to go with them through the longer road of life. "Together, for ever; For ever, together." Why should the simple presence of a person who to everyone else is a very common-place mortal, make two hearts so very glad?

Well—so it is! so it is! so it has been—so it ever will be. They were happier now than when they used to play together at Cauldknowe. They discussed their plans; their future grew to their minds so one, so intimately united, to look forward to it was delight. The flaming gold died out of the windows of the western front; the damson bloom deepened on the roofs of the four tall turrets, the crowns and pennants were hardly seen; the first twilight, that crepusculum of the day, the Jews in elder times called "the dove's-twilight," grew quiet and sombre. One by one the dove's feathers were changing by imperceptible gradation, while the lights came out here and there in the great fortress.

John Harbuckle and Alison had first been sitting in the summer house opposite the Devereux Tower. They had, of course, talked a little of Mac and Jessie. Then they had drifted—as was natural to both of them—into

antiquities. There were a heap of stones that had formed part of the old wall; they spent a good deal of time in examining them. At last Alison suggested that it was time to look after Jessie.

So they went along the path for a while until it was met by another which descended from the gate opposite the Mint.

At the foot of that path John Harbuckle paused.

"It was over there—on that long walk overshadowed by the dock warehouse – that I first met your uncle Arthur—Jessie's father;" remarked the old bachelor, pointing in the direction he mentioned. "It is rather a curious coincidence, but that path—as you may have noticed—ends in a little wilderness, and in that wilderness there is a grave."

"I have noticed it," said Alison.

"Few things escape you, my dear, you have an observer's eye. We shall be—indeed, I feel you are, a most admirable companion to me, Alie."

"I'm so glad," said Alison; then more seriously she added, "yes, I noticed the grave—but—" hesitating a little—"it has just occurred to me that uncle Arthur must have been coming *away from it* on that evening."

"True! I never thought of that before.

But these things mean nothing you know. I think we must be going in."

They went up the ascending path to the little walk screened by shrubs and so to the rustic arbour; there they found Mac and Jessie were preparing to return, so they all strolled back together to the house in Trinity Square.

"Don't you think, Jessie," said Mac, as they went along, "don't you think I ought to speak to Mr. Harbuckle? I suppose I am not exactly obliged to do so, but it seems the right thing to do."

Jessie assenting, Mac presently found himself in the dining-room with John Harbuckle.

"If things still promise well at the end of six months, might they venture then?" asked Mac, when he had given a little account of his prospects.

"Precarious! Very precarious!" said John Harbuckle; but immediately began devising liberal things.

"I won't allow myself to think it's precarious," said Mac; "I am sanguine of success. Since Jessie has told me she cares for me a little, I feel—I feel—I don't know how to put it—a sort of grasp," working his fingers rapidly, "a sort of fate-compelling grasp!"

"Yes—yes," said John Harbuckle, slowly, and with a long pause between the words;

"so I felt once myself. It is right you should feel so, quite right! But your new patient will require a stronger hand than yours. I've known a good many such cases in my time; it is only the pierced Hand with the print of the nails in it that is strong enough to control such a one."

"I know," said Mac, gravely.

"Well, I don't suppose we shall quarrel," said John Harbuckle. "I'll do my best for Jessie's happiness and for yours too."

"They're identical—they can't be separated," said Mac.

"Of course not: I don't wish to separate them," said John Harbuckle. "She's a dear girl; the house will seem rather desolate again without her; but as we must lose her I don't know that we can do better than give her up to the man of her own choice, provided—of course, that——"

"That he can keep her," said Mac. "I think I'm too fond of her to wish to—that is, I won't be rash;—I mean, we both intend to be very prudent."

"Then you have my very best wishes," said John Harbuckle.

"Thank you very much. It's—I'm afraid it's getting late. I must be going directly—if I might speak to her for one minute more?"

and without waiting for an answer, Mac went in search of Jessie, who, as it happened, was not very far off.

The "one minute" contained a great many more than sixty seconds; but Mac was returning to Scotland the next morning, so it was very excusable; and of course he had to give some time to Mrs. Bayliss.

After Mac had left him, John Harbuckle stood for some time looking out of the window. The dove's twilight had all gone, the raven's was fast darkening into a summer night.

John Harbuckle stood at the window of that dear room which had always been his nest, musing over the strange fate that had given him the right to speak to Jessie's lover as he had done; to act a father's part to the daughter of Arthur Bayliss and the Jessie of Catherine Court.

There was a gentle pleasure in his heart as he stood there thinking over it all.

He liked to look after Jessie and her interests. He looked out on the raven's twilight and was calmly happy; yet he sighed. He was very fond of Jessie.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TOWER SUBWAY.

IT might have been perhaps a fortnight after Mac's flying visit that one afternoon, as John Harbuckle was leaving his office for the day, no less a person than Mr. Robbins appeared at the hall door, half of which door was already closed.

Mr. Robbins took off his hat; it had once been John Harbuckle's.

"Good day, Robbins," said his late master; "how are you?"

"Very well, thank you, sir; hope you are the same."

"Yes, I am very well just now. And your wife?"

"Fust-rate, sir."

"Ah! I'm glad to hear it. She is now, I suppose, exercising her talent solely on your behalf? Do you want to speak to me about anything special?"

"Why, yes, sir! A little matter of business, if you wouldn't mind."

"Come into the office, then. Well, what is it?" said John Harbuckle, half fearing an application for a small loan.

"The fact is, Mr. Harbuckle, my knowledge of the harts, isn't, as you may say———"

"You've made a mistake or two in your purchases? We've all done that, you know, in our time."

"It's a drawback, when your funds is limited, sir, as I found."

"Just so," remarked Mr. Harbuckle, feeling the application for the loan coming near. "I warned you that it was a hazardous attempt."

"Yes, sir; but 'once bit, twice shy,' says I. So I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind helping me with a little———"

"Give it up at once, Robbins. Give it up!"

"Oh, it wasn't about money, sir," continued Robbins, in a more lively strain. "But, you know, my brother William, he and his wife, they're care-takers of a house in Fenchurch Avenue, one of that big new block—and a fine thing, too, it is for them; and if you should hear of something similar, me and Mrs. Robbins would be obliged to you for thinking of us; for we're not doing much in the second-'and line. But, as I was saying, this brother of mine, sir, have got a party in his 'ouse that's

taken the top floor, which is what not many people care for, because of the up and down, and the heighth ; but, as I was saying, this party've took the top floor, and I don't blame him neither—fust-rate rooms, and air like the sea-side. And says I to my brother William, when he told me, 'Jim,' says I, for we always call him 'Jim,' it's a way we've got into ; 'Jim,' says I, 'you be on to that party about antike furniture ; Queen Annie, Loo Cartorse, and cetera,' says I. 'There's money in that party, d'ye see, and I'm equal to a good commission.' So my brother William he goes at the party, and bless you, he works him beautiful! Be-eautiful, sir!" And Mr. Robbins's face glowed with appreciative delight and fraternal pride.

"Talked to him, sir," he went on, "about how things was all changed now, different from what they used to was in the days the party remembered, for he's been for years in foring parts, and it appears don't know nothing of 'igh art and such like—so he talks to him, does my brother William, all about the vulgarity in these days of buying furniture out of shops, and what bargains you can get second-'and if you only know where, and all that ; in fact, sir, he just showed him the way he should go—like a father, sir. Oh, it

was beautiful!—be-eautiful, the way he took him in, and——!"

The loan having retired into a dim future, Mr. Harbuckle fully entered into the spirit of Mr. Robbins's narrative and smiled a most encouraging and sympathetic smile.

"But now, sir, here's the rub! We must go straight with that party, mustn't we, sir?"

"Certainly, Robbins! Most decidedly!" said Mr. Harbuckle, with energy.

"The very words I knew you'd say, sir! And right he shall be, if I can keep him so! What I've come to you about, Mr. Harbuckle, is to make sure that whatever he gets from me it's the genuine article, and I'm blest if I always know one from t'other myself! But no duffers for him, sir!—it won't do! It'ud be dead against my own interests!" said the ingenuous Robbins.

"Very true! Very true! Then you want to show me something?"

"If you wouldn't mind, sir."

"Where is it to be seen?—at your place?"

"No, sir, it's across the water. In one of the streets behind Pickle-Herring Wharf. If you could oblige me with your opinion this evening, sir——"

"This evening? Let me see—this evening?" said John Harbuckle, as if trying to

remember what previous engagement he had made. "And what is it I'm to look at?"

"A sideboard, sir."

"Of what period?"

"That's where I lose myself, sir!" said Robbins, shaking his head. "It's like that one we did up for young Mr. Jackson when he was going to be married."

"Is it? Then I'll go over this evening after dinner. What do they want for it?"

"A song! sir; party as 'as it's been better off, but's rejuced; wants to part with it on the quiet."

"Pickle-Herring Wharf! Is there time to get over there before dinner, I wonder?"

"Why, bless you, sir, 'twouldn't take you no time to get there by the Subway!"

"To be sure! I never thought of that. All right, then, Robbins, I'll go over at once."

"Thank you, sir, very much obliged. Then I'll call again in an hour?"

"Yes, I'll be in by that time."

"Thank you, sir," and Mr. Robbins moved to the door of the office after he had given him the address.

"Robbins," said John Harbuckle, slightly raising his voice, "I think I'll send you a card. You'll get it first thing in the morning."

"Well, sir," acquiesced Robbins, with evident reluctance—

"Yes, I'll send you a card!" repeated John Harbuckle.

"Very well, sir, and thank you! Good evening, sir," and he departed.

"Pore old chap! Well I'm blest! 'As it come to this already?" he soliloquized, on his way along Trinity Square.

But householders may not perhaps think too harshly of Mrs. Bayliss's known objections to the visits of old servants, neither may they think her brother foolishly weak for taking these objections into consideration. It was one thing for John Harbuckle to see Mr. Robbins in the office, and quite another to allow him to call after business hours. This was a nice distinction that Mr. Robbins saw but did not appreciate.

"It is always as well to avoid domestic complications, if possible," said John Harbuckle to himself; and he sighed a gentle, regretful sigh, as he felt that he could thoroughly have enjoyed a good rummage in his den with Robbins, with Robbins who knew his little ways so well.

"One cannot have everything," he continued, as he left his home and turned towards the river. "And the girls are a great com-

fort to me. I almost wonder how I could have lived and been—well—yes—in a way—happy—certainly comfortable, without them. By-the-bye, I might have asked Alison to come with me now. She would have liked it. Shall I return for her? No—perhaps not. Mary would say, with much justice—although she's never been there herself—that the Tower Subway isn't a nice place for her Alison to go through, even with me."

Occupied with such-like reflections, he came, nearly opposite the gate of the Tower Gardens, to a sort of kiosk, the roof of which covered the top of a spiral staircase, a shabby, much-used, corkscrew-looking affair, by which he wound down and down, until he was many feet below the level of the Thames.

It was about the time when the dwellers on the Surrey side, who work all day in the City return to their homes. Among these are a number of young men and women, many of whom belong to a class popularly known as "'Arry and 'Arry's young woman." Their day's work being over, these young persons, whose vivacity is irrepressible, happily for them, clatter down that cork-screw, which magnifies the slightest sound, with a stamping and a shouting, and a comic song singing, and a shrill screeching, and a farm-yard imitationing,

and a whistling, and a war-whooping, and Aye Billie-ing! and a Ge-e-or-gie-ing! and a giggling, and a laughing, and a joking, and a shrieking, and a trampling and a pounding of feet, and a general effect as of a "jolly bank holiday gone mad."

H's are, it would seem, charged extra in the Tower Subway, so are left on the City side.

Can you imagine 'Ampstead 'Eath on a fine Whit-Monday? Can you imagine the sounds of that 'Ampstead 'Eath collected and enlarged? If so you may form some faint idea of the noises that deafened John Harbuckle as he laid down his half-penny on the toll-table at the cork-screw's base. Before him a long tube, like a drain pipe, lighted here and there with jets of gas, stretched away into a dim and apparently endless distance. Through this tube ran a foot-path so narrow that only one passenger at a time could tread it. This path ran between two low banks, such as are, or were some time since, to be seen in the cabins of penny steam-boats, and on to one of these banks a passenger coming from the opposite end must needs mount if he wished to pass the occupier of the path.

Along this path John Harbuckle went at his usual deliberate pace, the shrieking of the sportive young persons pursuing him, like

sounds heard in delirium; the odours—but here I refrain, the fine strong Saxon word for which I have substituted the mild euphemism, "odours," would inadequately represent the fragrance of the Tower Subway:

"*Ce n'était ambre; ce n'était fleur.*"

"Of course it is very wonderful that I should be walking underneath the Thames," said the refined old bachelor, as he plodded on in the immediate wake of a gentleman who, having either taken much more than was good for him, or being affected by the heat of the day and the peculiarities of the subfluvial passage, was lurching unpleasantly. "Modern science is a glorious thing, I'm very fond of it; but I think I'll go and look at St. Saviour's presently, and return home by the bridge."

At length, and not before he was tired of the tube, he arrived at another cork-screw, where there was more 'Arry and 'Arriet, and where he found it necessary to assist the gentleman who still preceded him.

The open air was indeed delicious after this little trip through the infernal regions.

He walked for a few minutes among the wharves.

"That's fine! That's worth coming to see!" he presently exclaimed. "I'll point that out to

young Woolcomb. I never noticed that before! Very fine!"

These remarks were called forth by an opening between the enormously high warehouse walls, a mere slit in their darkness, but revealing and framing a most charming little upright picture of river, shipping, and opposite shore.

"Yes, young Woolcomb should come over here! By the way, young Woolcomb's a nice fellow! I should think Alison would be interested in young Woolcomb, I'll ask his father to bring him some day."

(Oh wicked John Harbuckle! and here I may as well say, as I do not wish to have to refer again to the subject, that old Woolcomb did one day bring young Woolcomb to the house on Tower Hill, and that Alison found old Woolcomb a much more interesting companion than his son; which was unfortunate, perhaps, as there happened to be a Mrs. Woolcomb already, a chronic invalid, certainly, but who was likely to see them all out; not I suppose, that that made the slightest difference to Alison, who never thought of these sort of things as applying in any way to herself; but, as she remarked to Jessie after that visit, it only proved that a man can't possibly be an interesting companion until he is at

least forty, after which age he goes on progressing rapidly, if he is of the progressive order; which is not invariably the case.)

But to return to our bachelor.

He found the house, the sideboard, and its "rejuced" owner, who, by-the-bye, was slightly flavoured with rum; and then turned his steps towards St. Saviour's, at the foot of London Bridge; remarking, as he did so, that the sideboard, though genuine, was not a good example of its style.

Then a neighbouring church clock struck.

"It's later than I thought; I must, I'm afraid, return by that dreadful Subway, there's no time for the bridge;" said John Harbuckle.

So again, and with great reluctance, he descended the cork-screw, paid another halfpenny, and re-entered the tube.

The shrieking, tramping, and pounding was going on as deliriously as before.

He walked on along the narrow path, coming gradually up to a gas-jet, passing it, going into semi-darkness, approaching the light again, again going out into the hideous gloom.

Figures of passengers, now and then, loomed out from the distance, came nearer, passed a jet, mounted the ridge of the iron tube beside him, and were lost.

It had a singularly weird effect.

John Harbuckle noticed it; noticed it several times.

When he was more than half through the Subway and had just passed a gas-light he observed, just coming into sight, the figure of a tall man of an altogether different type from any he had yet met.

In the Tower Subway a tall man is obliged to take off his hat. This man had taken off *his* hat.

John Harbuckle and the tall man advanced towards the next gas-jet from opposite directions.

By the light of that jet they saw each other distinctly.

They met—within a foot or so.

Then the man with his hat in his hand stepped aside on to the ridge to John Harbuckle's left and passed on.

John Harbuckle turned, for him, sharply. The tall man who carried his hat in his hand was already vanishing into the dimness.

John Harbuckle followed him.

The man's steps were longer and quicker than his; John Harbuckle hurried after him.

By the next jet the man stopped, turned, and waited for him.

The old bachelor went up to him and

laying his hand firmly on the other's arm, said, with a quiet arresting decision in which was no shade of doubt:

"Arthur Bayliss!"

"John Harbuckle!" returned the man; and his voice was the voice the old bachelor had heard and recognized that night he had mused so long and earnestly in the Tower Gardens.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

"ARTHUR BAYLISS!"

"John Harbuckle."

But there was neither surprise nor alarm in either voice, nor in the eyes of either of the men as they looked each other steadily in the face by the light of the flaring gas-jet in the uncouth Tower Subway.

"How long have you come back from the dead?" asked John Harbuckle, with his usual slow and distinct utterance.

"I returned to London early in April," said Arthur Bayliss. "We can't talk in this hole. Are you going to Tower Hill? I will go with you."

Without another word they went on through the narrow Subway. There was only room for one passenger, Arthur Bayliss therefore went on first, John Harbuckle following close behind, as if he had him in charge.

The whole scene was weird, strange, and unreal to both of them. The magnified sounds were more hideous than ever.

They both paused at the top of the corkscrew stairs, and were again in the fresh air and on Tower Hill.

"They are with you?" said Arthur Bayliss.

"Mary and the girls?—yes. How do you know?" said John Harbuckle, with hesitation. He was debating with himself whether he should ask Bayliss home or not.

"I saw you with them," returned Bayliss, abruptly. Conversation was difficult between these two men.

"You returned in April. Why did you not come to me?" asked John Harbuckle, after an awkward pause.

"It was not an easy thing to do," said Bayliss.

John Harbuckle looked keenly at Bayliss.

He had eyes that saw as well as looked; distinctly the eyes of an observer, deep-set, and penetrating.

There was Bayliss, still handsome, well-dressed, and apparently prosperous, and yet he had found it difficult to call upon his friends.

John Harbuckle thought he would not ask him home just yet.

From the entrance of the Subway to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses is but a few yards.

"We can't talk here; shall we go in there?" said John Harbuckle, pointing to the gardens.

Bayliss hesitated for a moment.

"As you will," he said, as if sternly assenting to the inevitable.

The two men crossed the road side by side. John Harbuckle unlocked the gate—they went in. The gardens were then quite deserted. The children and their maids were gone; the few people who stroll there of an evening had not yet come.

They had the place to themselves.

"You were not surprised to see me," said Arthur Bayliss, making a definite assertion.

"I was not," said John Harbuckle. They were then standing still on the gravel path beside the coping of the moat.

Speech did not come readily to either of the men at that time.

Bayliss was the first to speak.

"You were not unprepared to see me?"

"I was not."

It seemed they could get no further than these short questions and shorter answers. There was a dead pause before John Harbuckle added: "I had already heard your voice and recognized it. It must have been the night you arrived that I heard it. It was over there by the Mint."

"I landed at St. Katherine's docks. It was about ten at night."

"That was the time. The bugles had just sounded."

Then there was another pause.

They moved on a few steps.

"It was a melancholy return," said Bayliss, after a while.

"Where did you come from?" asked John Harbuckle, in a tone of judicial inquiry.

"From the West Coast of Africa, *viâ* Lisbon," said Bayliss.

"You were, then, one of the few survivors of the wreck of the 'Mellicurrie?'" asked Harbuckle.

"I was never on board the 'Mellicurrie.'"

"Never? Who then was the Arthur Bayliss who went down in her?" asked Harbuckle, with both surprise and suspicion.

"Heaven knows; I don't. It was not I!" said Bayliss.

"But the Liverpool address in the *Times*? It was your address."

"Then it was a mistake," said Bayliss.

"A mistake! A mistake that killed your wife! She wore widows' weeds for you, Arthur Bayliss! Such mistakes should not occur!"

And John Harbuckle's usually calm tones

trembled and rose with an indignation he could not control.

"They should not," said Bayliss. "The bitterest pain in all my bitter life is the knowledge that that mistake occurred.—My Jessie is with you. I saw you here with her a few days since."

"You must have a good memory!" said John Harbuckle, grimly.

"Not a better one than yours appears to be," said Bayliss.

Again they paused and walked on.

"Before we speak of Jessie, I should like to know the cause of your long absence and silence," said John Harbuckle.

"Harbuckle," said Bayliss, with evident pain and difficulty, "once, at a crisis in my life, I took a terribly false step—I turned aside when I should have gone straight on."

"You evaded your creditors?"

"Am I obliged to tell you all?" asked Bayliss, speaking with still deeper pain and difficulty.

"I never force a confidence," said Harbuckle; "but something is due to me under the circumstances."

"The truth is my health is so shattered that it is all but impossible for me to dwell on some subjects," said Bayliss, hurriedly; then

more calmly he went on, "I have stayed out of England until the Statute of Limitation has paid all my debts. I am in business again now; I may some day be able to make things square. I hope so; I am doing better than I had any right to anticipate. Let us bury the past and start anew."

He held out his hand as he spoke.

John Harbuckle hesitated.

Jessie's mother, as he had last seen her, stood in his imagination between him and that outstretched hand. Then he told himself that after all she was Arthur Bayliss's wife and not his, that he had no right even to protect her against her husband; that she was at peace now; that she would wish him and that other man to be friends.

"Bayliss," he said, trying hard to speak calmly, but failing, "there is and there always must be *one* between us. I saw her not long before she died; I can never forget how she looked. She is in heaven now. God forgive you if you wronged her!" He held out his hand, Bayliss shook it; and they walked along side by side in silence.

"And Jessie?" presently asked Bayliss.

"She is with us. She is the light of our household. She makes life pleasant to all of us. She has—they have not been with me

long ; only long enough for me to grow—for me to see how bright she makes my sombre old home."

"My brother James took care of her, I suppose ?"

"Yes, she has been well cared for always, poor child !"

"I felt he would—I felt you all would, or—I suppose I should have acted differently. James, I saw by the papers, came in for a considerable legacy, which would have been mine, had the old man who left it him known I was living. It went the way of all poor James's money ?"

"Yes, Mary and her daughter have nothing but their wretched little pensions, and, with a good deal of difficulty, I've managed to save the Scotch place ; that brings them in a trifle. I hardly like to say it, but, as far as we can see, poor James died just in time to save them from absolute ruin. Of course I could do nothing while he was alive."

"Of course not ; I lost a good deal by him myself, at various times. I should like to see Jessie."

"Jessie is excessively nervous, she is of a peculiarly sensitive organization ; it will not do to be too sudden with this news, I could not answer for the result. I will go home,

and endeavour to prepare her mind a little, and then, perhaps——"

"I'll wait here; you'll be as quick as you can?"

"I will."

They walked in silence back towards the gate.

No two men could have looked more dissimilar. As they went side by side along the straight path above the moat, they offered a very striking contrast.

John Harbuckle was aware of it, aware then, as he had always been, that the tall, handsome man, with the long eye-lashes, and expressive eyes, had most decidedly the advantage over him in point of appearance; for he himself had never quite attained even the medium height, and now he stooped habitually. His scanty locks, too, were quite grey, while Bayliss possessed thick hair, that showed still some of the original brown.

The fact was, John Harbuckle was some years older than his rival. As he walked slowly along by that rival's side, he felt again as he had often felt before, that he never had a chance after Arthur Bayliss had come upon the stage.

It was in that very place, twenty-four years ago, that he and Bayliss had first met.

It was on just such an evening. The trees had grown a good deal since then; the garden was greener and fuller now, but all else looked much the same. He recalled it vividly, and so did Bayliss; although neither spoke of it, it seemed to each as if the other were remembering it.

John Harbuckle and his Jessie of Catherine Court had been sitting under the acacias nearly opposite the Beauchamp Tower. They had been engaged for some time. John Harbuckle was elder than she by ten years. They had been friends as long as she could recollect; he had always loved her, and she had been content that he loved her.

They were going to be married in a couple of months; they had been talking about where they should live; they both felt calmly happy, very contented, very secure.

James Bayliss and Mary Harbuckle had been walking up and down the long, straight path on the east side of the gardens, while John and his Jessie had been talking under the acacias.

Presently Jessie thought of something she had forgotten to say to Mary. It seemed to her of importance.

"Let us go and look for them," she said, rising at once. She was always rather impetuous.

"Oh, not yet! Let us wait!" John had said, for he had been very happy, and was reluctant to break up the quiet talk.

But she would go at once; so he went with her. They walked past the Beauchamp Tower and the new Barracks, and so on to the long path above the little kitchen gardens down in the moat, among which a soldier and his lass were strolling amorously, just as another soldier and lass were doing now, and where the great dock wall was frowning down on the path, just as now, and there they saw Mary Harbuckle and James, and, for the first time, *James's brother*.

The three saw them and walked leisurely to meet the two.

"That must be Arthur Bayliss with them. He has just come then! They were expecting him," said John Harbuckle's Jessie.

When they came near, John Harbuckle noticed that Arthur Bayliss was a very handsome young man. They were all young in those days.

It was not very long after that, that John Harbuckle had thought of hanging himself on the old lamp-rod in Catherine Court which faced the house where his lost Jessie used to live.

It seemed to both those men, as they walked

side by side in those same gardens, as if it had all happened only yesterday, instead of four-and-twenty years ago. It all stood between them still.

At the gate they parted for the time; Arthur Bayliss turned again to the path above the moat, John Harbuckle towards his house in Trinity Square.

He went up that fatal hill, which so many a brave man has faced on his way to the block and axe, with a very grave countenance and a heavy heart.

"I bear him no grudge, I hope, for that," he said to himself. "I hope I do not. It was but natural, I suppose, that she should have preferred him; and they were both frank and honest, they hid nothing, they told me all; it was natural, I suppose. I ought not to bear him malice for it, and—I hope I don't. But—I can't forgive him for killing her! He did kill her; how, I don't know, but he did it! I've shaken hands with him. I mean the past shall be the past; but her face, as I last saw it, haunts me, and haunt me it always will. *He* never saw it as I saw it. But doubtless he's been punished enough. It is not for me to add to his punishment, and, God helping me, I will not. It will be hard to give him up his Jessie; it has been a great

pleasure to me to see her mother's daughter about the old house. She is a dear girl—a very dear girl."

And John Harbuckle touched his eyes for a moment with his right hand fore-finger.

Now while John Harbuckle and Arthur Bayliss had been in the Tower Gardens the little household in Trinity Square were wondering what could have become of him.

He was usually very punctual; such a thing as for him to keep the dinner waiting a whole half-hour was, previous to this evening, unknown.

Mrs. Robbins's successor, whose affections were with the military, and who was anxious for her "evening out," sent up heart-rending accounts of the state of the fish; but still the master came not.

Mrs. Bayliss began to grow seriously anxious, looked out of the window and as far as she could see, and at last gave the word of command to serve in five minutes.

"What can have become of uncle John?" they all said.

"I thought he'd have taken me down Thames Street to show me the site of Castle Baynard," said Alison, aloud, adding to herself (for she feared to appear pedantic), "I

looked up that story he told us, in the Guildhall Library to-day, and I've found several fresh items for him."

As for Jessie, she was already discussing privately whether *the* dress should be white satin or white silk, and wondering what Mac was doing at Muirhead, and whether there would be a note for her to-morrow morning.

The girls were sitting in opposite corners of one of the window seats of the drawing-room. They were both wearing soft grey dresses with much lace around their throats and wrists. They made, together with the lace curtains and the bright flowers in the painted boxes, a very pretty picture; they looked so soft and gentle, sitting there together; for although in common arithmetic one and one make two, two girls, who harmonise well, seem to be, when together, of more value than they are as two separate items; therefore, it strikes me that one and one, as in this instance, may sometimes make more, and sometimes perhaps less than two. You see you can't *group* one girl.

Mrs. Bayliss looked at her girls with a calm pleasure. Mrs. Bayliss's temper had been very good that day; the want of continual friction was slowly improving it. As she saw her girls sitting there together, she thought that

two girls were most decidedly prettier than one.

"But"—hearing the clock strike—"dear, dear, dear me!" she cried, "what can have become of uncle John? Look out of the window, Alison."

"Ah! here he is, at last!" said Alison. "Creeping along as if he had the whole day before him. Oh, you naughty uncle John! Mother, how very grave he's looking!" she added this last remark as John Harbuckle came nearer.

"It's been a hot, tiring day," said Mrs. Bayliss; "I wonder he didn't come in rather earlier than later on such a day."

A minute or two afterwards they heard his slow step on the stairs. Mary went out to him.

"Why, John, how late!" she began.

"Mary, I want to speak to you," he interrupted, in a voice that at once compelled attention and awakened anxiety.

"Yes," she said, scanning his face eagerly.

"Come up to my den," he said. "The girls are in the drawing-room, I suppose."

They went up to one of the top rooms, which was crowded in a way that scarcely allowed space for two chairs.

"Sit down," he said, getting a chair out of

a corner, and then, taking his own, which was by an open desk:

"You remember the conversation we had the other night about Arthur Bayliss?" he began at once.

"Distinctly," said Mary, with a quick glance at her brother.

"And the face in the crowd?" asked John.

"The more I think of it, the more it recalls him to me," said Mary. "You have seen it somewhere else?"

"I have."

"Good Heavens, John! Is it possible he can be alive?"

"He is. I have seen him."

"Seen him! Where?"

"We met in the Tower Subway."

"John! you don't mean it? I can't believe it!"

"It's true, though. We have spoken."

"And did he recognise you, John? I can't believe it!"

"At once, but then anyone might recognise me here."

"And—and—how was he looking?" asked Mary, a thrill of pleasure stealing in among her surprise.

"Prosperous as to money matters; he's wretched enough, I fancy, in all else."

"My James's brother! Where is he?—where is he, John?" the delight gaining on the surprise.

"I left him in the Tower Gardens. He has stopped out of England until Time has paid his debts, and now he's come back. He wants to see Jessie."

"Of course, of course! He must see her at once, let's call the poor darling! How delighted she'll be!—she was always so fond of him. Let me go and fetch her. Or—I suppose we mustn't tell her too suddenly—what shall we do? I'm so glad, John! I *am* so glad! Ah, if Jessie's poor mother had been alive! But, John, what's he been doing with himself, and why didn't he let us know?—why didn't he let *her* know? Why didn't he tell his wife?"

"Perhaps he did," said John, very gravely.

"Then if he did—no, no, she would never—she *could* never—have helped him to do wrong! And yet—I said *it was remorse that killed her!*"

"Mary, never mention such an idea to anyone. Her name must be kept sacred. Never again let us allude to this even amongst ourselves. Remember, Mary, her name is sacred. What you have said must never be breathed again, not to any living creature."

"What will not a woman do for a man she loves?" said Mary, fervently.

"Never mind! never allude to it again," said John, sternly. "But now, about Jessie. Tell her to get on her hat as quickly as she can."

"You must tell her something first. It would nearly kill her to see him suddenly."

"Trust that to me," said John. "I'll go and take a turn in Catherine Court; send her out to me there."

"Can't you bring him in to dinner, presently; I'll have it kept."

"No, no! Never mind me, I'll take what comes."

Mrs. Bayliss ran downstairs at a rate that, had her mind been at sufficient leisure to notice, would have surprised even herself.

"Jessie," she said, putting her head inside the drawing-room; "come here, Jessie. Uncle John has brought you some wonderfully good news; he's gone out into Catherine Court. Put on your hat and run out to him there, he wants to talk to you."

Jessie sprang up, her eyes wide open with amazement.

"Good news! Good news for me! Why, what good news can he have for me? I never have any news!"

"Silly child, don't stand there talking, but get on your hat, and go out and hear it."

Jessie flew upstairs for her hat.

"I wonder, can he have seen Mac Carruthers! Can Mac have called?—or perhaps he knows of something better for him." And her fingers could hardly fasten her hat-strings for trembling.

"Good news! I can't imagine what it can be, unless—but that's nonsense—unless it's to do with Mac Carruthers! There's no one else it can be about!"

Hat and gloves were all she needed.

Down the stairs, past the swing door, now rosy in new red baize, along the hall and out into the street, over the pavement, under the old iron-work, round by the antiquated corner shop, and into the broad court between the two tall rows of early Georgian houses, she ran, and there, just by the horizontal lamp-rod and the curious gridiron-like arrangement against which last-century lamplighters had placed their ladders, was John Harbuckle standing, waiting for her.

He went a few steps to meet her flying form.

"Uncle John, uncle John! what's the good news! Oh, make haste, uncle John, I'm just mad for it," she cried.

"My dear child!" he said, and stopped, for the moment, unable to get any further.

"Why do you look so grave, if it's good news?" Jessie cried, a wave of sudden terror rushing over her, and she lifted up a face all quivering with hope and fear to his.

"It *is* good news, my dear," he said, greatly moved. "It *is* good news; so good that I'm afraid it will frighten you, like good news sometimes does; and yet, indeed Jessie, it need not frighten you, for it will make you very glad. Don't be frightened!"

"Very well, then, I won't! But—is it about Mac? About someone in Scotland?" She could not keep back the question, nor the blushes that went with it.

"About no one in Scotland," said he, with a grave, unsteady smile. "Jessie, do you remember Trinity Monday?"

"Ah! you have seen that face again?" she cried, with a wild terror in her voice.

"Take my arm, my dear," said uncle John.

She took it, he placed her hand firmly upon it, and put his own hand over hers. They both walked slowly along the court.

"Tell me all you remember about your father's going away. You must have been about eleven years old then, I think," asked John Harbuckle, in tones that tried to be calm.

"Oh, you've heard something about him! You have met a survivor of the dreadful wreck! Oh, uncle John!—it was all so terrible, I feel as if I should die when I think of it."

"Did your mother ever tell you he was drowned!" asked John Harbuckle.

"I read it in the *Times*. Poor little mother! I'm sure it killed her!"

"Think now, Jessie, think and answer carefully; *did your mother ever tell you your father was shipwrecked?*"

"Oh, uncle John, why do you talk about that dreadful time! It makes me shake all over only to think of it."

And indeed her hand was trembling so, that he pressed his own over it as if to still it.

"She told you, perhaps," he said, distinctly but with extreme solemnity, "that you were not to grieve too much, for that many people who were thought to be lost at sea, had been picked up."

"Yes, she often said that," said Jessie; "and I have always read all the stories of shipwrecks, I could find. When I was little, I often fancied my father would come back, but it's too long ago now."

"Haven't you read about people on desert

islands, and that sort of thing?" asked uncle John.

"He's come!" she cried; and although it was a warm summer evening her teeth chattered.

"I have heard that he is alive. Shall we go in, Jessie? Perhaps you'd better lie down and rest a little, before I tell you any more."

"Oh no, no! Go on! Oh, go on!"

"He's been out in Africa, all this time. It is possible you may meet him some day in London."

"I have met him! I'm sure it was he I saw that day! Oh why!—why didn't mother know he was alive! Oh, uncle John, she used to say such dreadful things! It drove her nearly mad, I think! She frightened me so much!—I can't get over it! It all comes back to me now!"

"Would you like to see your father, Jessie?"

"Oh yes! Yes! Where is he? You know, I see you know!"

John Harbuckle was feeling very much afraid of her, she trembled so, and looked so wild. He did not know what best to do; perhaps, after all, it would be better to tell her at once.

"Yes, Jessie, I know where he is; I met him half an hour ago in the Subway. He is waiting for you in the Tower Gardens."

"Let me go!" Jessie exclaimed, turning at once, but in a strange, vague, overwrought way. John Harbuckle turned with her; he hastened his steps, but kept her fluttering hand firmly on his arm.

They went out of the court, down the hill, to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses.

"See, there he is!" said John Harbuckle.

Jessie looked up with eyes brilliant with excitement to a tall figure half hidden by the trees. There was that in her face that quite unmanned John Harbuckle.

He unlocked the gate, stepped just within the Tower Gardens, then took the girl's quivering face within his own trembling hands, bent over it kindly, and kissed it.

"God bless you, Jessie!" he said, huskily. Then he went outside the gate, locked it, gave her the key and turned slowly and sadly towards home.

"I did not know I had grown so fond of that dear girl!" said John Harbuckle; and the Tower Gardens grew very dim to him for a few moments.

Her father had come, but it was hard to give her up.

She had fluttered away from John Harbuckle, she was gone; he felt it was very hard to face Tower Hill and life without her.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE BELL-TOWER SAW.

DARE we go further? Must we turn away with John Harbuckle, feeling that the meeting between the child and the long-mourned parent is too sacred for strangers' eyes to witness? Is it intrusion to enter the Tower Gardens?

Perhaps.

We to whom just now gates and moats and ballium walls are as nothing, why need we disturb them by our presence? Why may we not fly across the moat and perch somewhere out of their way, as soon as we have made up our minds that sympathy, and not mere idle curiosity, makes us wish to know what they will do and say?

Or shall we lose ourselves altogether? Shall we merge our identity into that of the old Bell-Tower at the opposite angle, the Bell-Tower whose quaint "look-out" seems now like a great bird-cage hanging in mid-air, sheer against the gentle sky of this summer

evening? Yes, we will be for a while that Bell-Tower.

During the many centuries we have stood at that angle what partings we have witnessed! We saw Thomas More's noble Margaret force her way through crowd and barrier to her doomed father's arms, as down below, there, by the Traitors' Gate, he followed the axe-edge. We saw that scene—the massive ring to which they fastened the rope that kept back the crowd is still in the wall of our neighbour, the Bloody Tower—we saw that despairing embrace, and are we not to witness the happy meeting over yonder in our own Tower Gardens? We must see it.

So we look across the moat to the path among the trees. A girlish form flutters onwards, a man comes to meet her, there are out-stretched arms, a cry, a sob, and the two figures are but as one.

After all the bitter farewells, who can blame us that we are glad?

A sudden shyness came over Jessie as she felt that John Harbuckle had left her.

For a moment she hesitated, faltered, but still went on. That tall man with the heavy beard was not quite like the father she remembered.

A faintness touched her, the gardens and the Tower grew misty to her. All she saw was the tall figure hurrying towards her.

They came nearer, he raised his hat, she caught his eyes, and knew he was indeed her father, ran to him and threw herself into his outstretched arms, where for a moment she seemed to lose all consciousness, although she did not faint.

He pressed her to him, kissing her again and again.

"Jessie!—Jessie!" between long pauses was all he could say. The voice so well remembered and so unchanged penetrated her dazed brain. She lifted her head from his shoulder, and held up her face to his.

He saw how over-wrought she looked.

"Darling, darling! How I have frightened you!" he said, kissing the sweet face. "Come to that bench! Lean on me!" He led her the few steps, they sat down and she leaned against him, still clinging to him, but still hardly conscious.

"You are getting better?" he asked, anxiously.

She muttered some faint, inarticulate sound. They sat still for some moments, and presently she cried a little with her face buried against

his shoulder; while he could say nothing but "Jessie! Jessie!"

"You are better?" he asked again after a while.

"Yes!" she said with a long drawn sigh. "Oh, Poozie! why did you go away?" she asked, going back to the familiar childish name she used to give him in the days gone by; and in spite of the ashen grey tint that still lingered on her face and lips, a little bit of childish grace rushed back with it.

"Ah, Jessie! Jessie! How many and many a time have I heard you calling for your poor old Poozie!" said he, his eyes filling with tears.

"Then why didn't you come?" she asked, still faintly.

"Because I couldn't! You don't believe anything else but dire necessity could have kept me away from you, do you?" he answered, with a certain pathetic wistfulness that was quite his own.

"Oh no!" Jessie answered with decision; and then they were silent, and he stroked her hair and kissed it. "Have you been on a desert island all this time?" she asked, presently, and she turned and looked at him with an interest that was almost childlike in its quaintness. The colour was returning to her face.

"Darling child, how lovely you've grown! No, Jessie, I've neither been shipwrecked nor been living on a desert island; but for all that I couldn't come back before; I couldn't, or I should have come."

"You don't look like a desert-islander," said Jessie, turning round to survey him the better.

Indeed Arthur Bayliss's carefully tended *personnel* suggested any other character rather than Juan Fernandez or Robinson Crusoe.

"Ah, I'm so glad you weren't shipwrecked!" Jessie went on. "I couldn't bear you to be shipwrecked!" and she shuddered.

"Couldn't you, darling? Ah, child, how much I've wanted you! Do you know I had a photograph of you and your mother with me; every night I've kissed them all these years; I don't think I've missed once, except when I've been too ill to know anything."

"Ah!" and in Jessie's murmur of sympathy there was the tenderest, most caressing love, and the most pitying tears.

"Dear child, how lovely you've grown!" her father exclaimed again. "Let me look at you well! To think I should own so much beauty! But"—scanning her brightening face—"best of all, darling—you've grown so like her, so like your mother."

"Ah! But do you know, I've seen *you* so often in the glass! That's why I knew you directly. Oh, do you know, I saw you—I've seen you before—dear father—oh, dear, dear father! I saw you one day—we were coming out of St. Olave's Church—there was a crowd—I was frightened—the service had been all about shipwrecks—I saw your eyes—I was sure they were your eyes, and I knew—I thought you were drowned—I was so frightened! And to think you were alive all the time! Oh!" and she broke down in a tumult of tears and laughter and kisses.

They could neither of them say anything more for a while, but presently he found words to tell her how he had seen her and watched her in those very gardens, and how he had not dared to speak to her, and had slunk back to his lodgings, and had been very ill with none but strangers to tend him.

He never knew how he managed to tell her that.

"But why—why—why didn't you speak to me?" cried Jessie, with a dread of hidden wrong.

"I saw you were happy, child!"

"And were you *never* coming to me? *Never?*"

"I wanted everything to be pleasant for you first, darling."

Her face grew very grave.

"You shouldn't have waited for that. We needed *you* more than pleasantness," she said, with a gravity most unlike herself. And then her voice changed to tones of more acute distress. "Oh! if poor mother could only have known you were alive! How could you let her think you were dead? Oh!—it was too dreadful, it killed her. How could you let her be killed?"

He turned away, covering his eyes with his hand. For a few seconds he could not speak. Then he said in an authoritative, but broken-hearted tone:

"Jessie, you may be quite sure of one thing: your mother would have welcomed me back without a reproach. She knew how much I loved you both, she could have formed some idea of what agony it has cost me to be separated from you."

"Dear, dear father, I don't reproach you, only—oh! she would have been so glad!"

"Don't speak of it, Jessie; I can't bear it."

There was a long pause.

"Tell me about yourself. You are living with aunt Mary at her brother's?" he asked, making a great effort to rouse himself.

"Yes; where are you living? Of course I'm coming to you. We can have a nice

little house all to ourselves, somewhere, can't we? That is"—and, remembering Mac, she suddenly broke down.

"Ah, child! there are difficulties to be faced."

"I'll face them!" said Jessie, bravely.

"Jessie! you've grown a real woman!"

He looked at her with fervent admiration. "But we mustn't discuss troublesome things to-day," he added. "Well, well, well, Jessie, how beautiful you've grown!"

"Beautiful? Oh, I'm so glad! I shouldn't like you to have come back and found me ugly; you don't mean it really, though, it's only because you're so glad to see me, and because you recognize likenesses in my face."

"Really, really, Jessie, I do," said he, in a lighter and brighter tone than he had yet used. It brought back to her the pleasant days before the great trouble came. "And so you are living with aunt Mary, and you're very happy?"

"Yes; but, oh father, such a winter in Scotland! It was dreadful! Aunt Mary's brother—he's such a good, kind old uncle John——"

"Is he though? And very fond of you?" interpolated Jessie's father, with perhaps a little more meaning than she quite understood.

"Oh, yes! So are they all. Uncle James —he was so like you—only—only, well, in some things he wasn't—he had a farm—some money was left him, and he would take a farm because he and aunt Mary had been reading all sorts of horrid little books; and the crops would get spoiled, and the stock would die, and there never was enough of anything; and poor uncle James was killed——"

"Killed?"

"Yes, that is, he thought he knew all about reaping machines, and he didn't, that was how it was. It was very terrible; and poor auntie broke her heart about him, I do believe. She's been quite different ever since. It was so dreary after he was dead; frightfully, frightfully dreary, you can't imagine how dreary!"

"Can't I? Why I've been so dreary, that I wonder I'm alive at all! But, Jessie," and there came that pleasant recognisable light in his eyes, that was quite his own, "it astonishes me to hear you say it was so dreary in Scotland. Were there no alleviations to that dreariness, eh?"—and he asked the question in so curious an accent, that Jessie, having looked up and caught his expression, suddenly looked down and coloured.

"How do you know?" she asked, demurely.

"No one but a Scotchman could have given that absolutely literal answer about the London and North Western the other evening," said Arthur Bayliss, smiling.

Jessie started, in charming confusion.

"You heard him then?—you saw him when he came?"

"When he came tearing up to the railings?" he said. "Yes, I saw him, and you also—that was when I saw you. Ah, my darling! it was very dreadful to me; and yet I thanked God you were safe and happy. Come, Jessie, what's his name, and when is it to be, when are you going to be married? Not soon, I hope, it won't do to give you away as soon as I have found you."

"It's not to be for ever so long, not for six months yet," said Jessie. "His name is Mac—Mac Carruthers."

"And a very nice name, too! Does he want to take you back to Scotland?"

"We don't know; it's all so uncertain at present," and she told him how matters stood.

"Ah! I wish I had brought home a few stray thousands for you, darling!" said Arthur Bayliss, when he had heard Jessie's little story; which she managed to tell very prettily. "But perhaps it's all for the best;

I don't want to lose you yet. Who is that? Can it possibly be aunt Mary?"

And there, indeed, was Mrs. Bayliss, who had borrowed a neighbour's key, hurrying towards them.

"Oh, Arthur! I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, when they were within speaking distance, stretching out both her hands in welcome.

"So am I, Mary! How are you? Thank you, for all your kindness to my Jessie! She's all I could have wished her to be! She's so unspoiled. Thank you! Thank you!"

Then there was more weeping and rejoicing, and at last Arthur Bayliss was carried off in triumph by Jessie and her aunt to the house in Trinity Square, where a very savoury "fatted calf" (of which the lordly salmon was one ingredient) had been prepared to celebrate his return.

In vain Arthur Bayliss protested that he had already dined:

"It's no use, uncle Arthur," said Alison, "without such a festival we could not think you were safe at home! Without it you might again vanish! Without it we could not think you were real!"

The five of them therefore sat down at the festal board with joy and wonder, and pre-

tended to make a meal; Mrs. Bayliss doing the honours in a dazed bewilderment; Arthur Bayliss and his daughter sitting hand in hand, wondering that they should be together, their wonder growing every moment. Presently they all went into the drawing-room and sat round the open window in the deep twilight that was nearly as much darkness as would come that clear summer night.

Far off was heard the sound of street traffic not yet quite all gone; it reached them only as the rushing of a river, like the Birren when not in spate. In a distant corner of the square a German band was playing popular Volkslieder "Du! Du!"—"Blau blüht ein Blümelein!" The trees in the gardens stood absolutely still, not a leaf was moving; the street-lamps shone in the atmosphere singularly pure and sweet that comes to London sometimes at twilight.

Mrs. Bayliss and Arthur and his daughter sat together and talked, still with a feeling of awe and mystery, about James, and Africa, and other days.

John Harbuckle wandered aimlessly about the room for a time; the quiet evening did not bring him peace. Presently, however, he went up to Alison and, putting his hand gently on her shoulder, he said under his voice:

"Come up to my den."

Alison was feeling as if in the way, so was glad to go. They went upstairs together.

"I bought some old Wedgwood a few days before you came here," said John Harbuckle. "If you wouldn't mind helping me, Alison, I'd wash it now. It's so dirty; I hardly know what it's like, but I fancy we shall find it very good. I rather think it will match that tray in the drawing-room. I don't seem to have had any time to look at it; so perhaps, if you don't mind, my dear, we had better do it now. Would you mind collecting the things we shall require? They—h'm—*I don't think they want us down-stairs just now.*"

CHAPTER X.

THE ECHO IN CATHERINE COURT.

"THEY don't want us down stairs just now," said John Harbuckle to Alison, with a good deal of emphasis.

"They'll never need us any more," returned Alison; but without pausing an instant she went off to collect what was necessary for the cleaning of the Wedgwood.

John Harbuckle turned to the window, and looked out on the raven's twilight.

It was only a few evenings since that he had stood looking out on the same scene with his heart full of an almost paternal fondness for Jessie. He remembered pathetically how happy it had made him. That after glow of the one romance of his life had all faded now, it seemed; he felt chilled and sad. "But she belongs to him—she belongs to him; she is his daughter—she is his by right of nature—so it must be—so let it be!" he said to himself.

He heard the murmur of voices from the

drawing-room, he turned away and lighted his lamp.

When Alison came back, laden with all sorts of things, she found uncle John with his coat off, his sleeves tucked up, and quite ready for work.

They spent nearly two hours, he, in carefully washing the delicate porcelain and brushing out the grime from the finely cut little figures, she, in as carefully drying it on the softest old towel she could find.

Alison worked well, and steadily; for although she was too much excited to know or care what she was doing, there are states of mind in which the excitement of the brain lends unusual sureness and dexterity to the fingers. She neither broke nor chipped anything, although thought and touch had little connection with each other.

Uncle John was pleased with her apparent attention and the brightness of her eyes.

"There is a great deal of solid satisfaction to be derived from *things*; they are, perhaps, on the whole, more to be relied upon than persons," said John Harbuckle, brushing the white clouds from which Aurora was rising (on the side of a vase); "it is well to have an affection for things. I have found them a great comfort at times. Things and places—

the City more particularly, I have found full of interest and consolation. The City now-a-days has lost, so it seems to me, much of its permanence, there is such constant building and rebuilding going on, and even the time-honoured ground-plan is rapidly changing; but it is still a very great pleasure to me, it is still 'Merrie London, my most kindly nurse.'"

"Yes," said Alison, looking up from the saucer she was drying, "I like it better than any place I ever was in. That comes, perhaps, from having been born here. Oh! uncle John, I forgot to tell you, I went to the Guild-hall Museum this afternoon, and found out more about Matilda Fitzwalter. Then I happened to see a map of Old London, and by it I found my way home by good part of the wall. First I went to Moorgate, then along London Wall to Bishopsgate, by Houndsditch to Aldgate, and along the Minories to the Tower. And, do you know, I'm going to call the Minories 'The Street of The Little Sisters' —*Sorores Minores*, you know. What do you think of that, uncle John?"

Uncle John's face suddenly beamed with delight.

"Dear, dear, dear me!" he exclaimed. "The thousands of times I've been through

the Minories, and the discussions Woolcomb and I and other 'earth-worms' have had about the Convent of the Poor Clares that used to be there—and none of us ever thought of calling it in your simple poetic English, 'The Street of The Little Sisters!'"

"Poetic?" said Alison, blushing with delight; and with something of the feeling with which Jessie had asked, "Wonderful?" the other evening in the Tower Gardens.

"Poetic! yes, my dear. Ah!"—and uncle John looked at her with an expression she had never seen on his face before—"how much everything in this world needs a woman's touch!"

Alison felt moved, but sought refuge in a remark that she too often made to herself:

"I'm afraid mine is very clumsy!"

"No, no, I can't have you say that!" 'The Street of The Little Sisters!' Truly womanly of you, Alison, to think of so charming a name for that remarkably ugly street! Woolcomb will be more than ever impressed with your qualities, he'll be quite enraptured!"

So they chatted on until it struck John Harbuckle that it must be very late.

"Well, my dear, I think we must put the things away and go down. I'm very much pleased with the stuff. It's much better than

I had fancied; but I think I shall let Woolcomb have it. Let us go down."

They found the other three just where they had left them, still talking by the open window in the dark.

Arthur Bayliss rose as he heard the door opened.

"Then you'll come round to breakfast tomorrow?" were the first words that reached John Harbuckle's ear as he entered the room.

It was his sister, Mary Bayliss, who uttered them; and John Harbuckle knew, with a certainty that left no room for questioning, that he was no longer the master of his own house.

Arthur Bayliss did not accept the invitation readily, so John Harbuckle felt compelled to say:

"We shall expect you, Bayliss."

Courtesy, right feeling, demanded the words, but it struck John Harbuckle that he had signed his own deed of abdication.

"Thanks. Yes, I'll come round," said Bayliss, shaking hands with everybody.

Then he left the room, Jessie clinging to his arm as if afraid of losing him again, and Mrs. Bayliss following.

"I ought to be very thankful he's come back safe and sound," John Harbuckle said to

himself; "of course, I ought to be glad; but somehow I can't rise to it. I suppose I shall be used to it in time, but at present I can't rise to it. It's no use trying, I can't."

Jessie and Mary had gone down to the door with the long-lost Arthur. The sound of laughing, and talking, and lingering "Good-byes" came up from the open door below to the open window above.

"I wonder if Mary would welcome me back so cordially, if I went away? I think she might have let Jessie see him off alone. Well, well, I never was attractive," he said to himself. "Alison, you must try and keep Jessie quiet; take her upstairs at once, you mustn't let her talk any more to-night."

"Oh, no, we won't talk, of course, we'll try to be quiet. But isn't it a wonderful thing about uncle Arthur? Isn't it a grand thing for Jessie? Isn't he handsome, and so very like my poor father! Altogether, I feel in a perfect whirl. And he thinks Jessie has grown so lovely. So she has; she seems to me prettier than any other girl I've ever met. I hope he won't take her away. Why couldn't he come and live here? Well, perhaps that wouldn't do, I don't know. Perhaps they've arranged something else, only I do hope he won't take her away."

"He will, you may depend upon it," said John Harbuckle, from a dark and distant corner, where he was pottering about nervously among his book-shelves.

"That will be horrible," said Alison; "but of course she belongs to him, only I do so hate giving up people I'm fond of. I'm a greater coward at parting than at anything else."

"My case, precisely," said John Harbuckle.

"There, at last they've shut the door," said Alison. She put her head out of the window and called:

"Good-night, uncle Arthur."

"Good-night!" he returned; he had already gone some little distance. Then the door was opened again, and by the light of the street-lamp, Alison saw Jessie running along the pavement after him.

She drew in her head.

Arthur Bayliss turned at the sound of the light, quick step.

Jessie ran up to him, threw her arms round his neck, and buried her head against his breast, crying:

"I wish you weren't going! I wish you weren't going! I'm afraid of losing you again!"

He kissed her many times.

"Well, darling, it's only for a few hours," he said.

"I'm afraid of your not being real," she whispered. "You'll be sure to come early to-morrow?"

"If I'm alive," he answered with more kisses. He led her back to the house again. She tore herself away from him, and ran upstairs to the window.

That last clasp of Jessie's arms was almost too much for her father; he was trembling all over with the thrill of it when he turned into Catherine Court on his way back to Fenchurch Avenue, and for a few moments he held on to the ironwork at the entrance. He had lived through so much emotion since he had met John Harbuckle early that evening in the Tower Subway, that he now felt as if he could hardly stand.

"My dear little girl! My dear little girl!" was all he could say to himself; but the joy of it was now absolute pain.

Presently he felt better and went on; went past the house where his wife had lived in her girlhood, and along the court through which he had led her when he and she had returned from Barking Church close by, as bridegroom and bride.

He lingered a little while there, feeling, with

something almost like content, that Jessie's mother, could she know of that night's meeting, would rejoice.

Then he went on. There were no lights in the houses now; he was the only person in Catherine Court. He passed quickly between the two high walls at the end of the court, and the walls echoed back his step.

It startled him; the echo seemed like the foot-fall of that evil deed that was always on his track.

He started, but passed on at once through Seething Lane, past the Gate of the Dead, now touched by the soft summer moonlight, by Hart Street, Mark Lane, Fenchurch Street, Fen Court to the Avenue; and there, on the handsome brass plate within the doorway, he read, as he let himself in, the name, "Arnold Birkett."

It seemed to stand up and confront him as the very substance of that evil deed that always followed him, of whose dogging foot-fall he had heard as the echo of his own between the high walls of Catherine Court.

Arnold Birkett—a mere name, as he knew only too well—was a very ugly difficulty to face, and Arthur Bayliss was not a radically brave man.

That name rose up ominously between himself and his new-found Jessie.

How could he bring Jessie Bayliss there while "Arnold Birkett" was on that plate and he was known by that name?

After he had rang several times the door was opened by Mr. Jim Robbins. Arthur Bayliss went into the wide stone hall, "Arnold Birkett," in black paint upon the first door on the right, met him there also.

It was a fine large house, only just finished. He went up several flights of stairs to his private rooms.

Beyond the few things necessary they were not yet furnished. They were large, bare, and unhomelike.

"They want Jessie!" he said; "they must have Jessie! How is it to be done? She can't come here and live with 'Arnold Birkett!' How am I to tell her? I can't; I must."

Between "I can't" and "I must" Arthur Bayliss passed a restless night; but by the morning "I must" had conquered.

"I must tell John Harbuckle all," he said. 'It will be a bitter task; but it will have to be done; there's no help for it. But all my tasks have been bitter since that one fatal act. Good God, is there never forgiveness!"

he cried, in despair. "I could almost wish I had never returned; never seen my sweet girl's face nor felt her clasp! I am bound to 'Arnold Birkett' like the Roman criminal to the corpse! There's no help for it now. I must tell John Harbuckle!"

As Arnold Birkett, Arthur Bayliss had lived and done business for several years abroad. As Arnold Birkett he was already known in the City; as Arnold Birkett he had taken the offices in Fenchurch Avenue, and under that name had a considerable connection in London, in Manchester, and on the coast of Africa. The Tildesleys, all his few fresh friends, knew him as Arnold Birkett. Arnold Birkett was in the business world an individual with a definite position; Arthur Bayliss was a man long since dead and almost forgotten, except, perhaps, by those who happened to have been his creditors.

It was a very grave difficulty, he could not see his way out of it.

In that long conversation by the open window of the house in Trinity Square he had never alluded to Arnold Birkett; and indeed, when Mary Bayliss came to put that conversation together in her thoughts, it struck her that, although he had talked much and told them a great deal about Africa, and also

something of his hopes and his prospects in London, he had, after all, said very little about himself.

Mary wanted to ask her brother-in-law a great many questions ; but as she felt sure they would not be answered, she resolved to wait, and let the truth—about which her curiosity was vividly aroused—reveal itself by degrees. She was certain, however, that she should never rest satisfied until she could make a consecutive narrative of Arthur's proceedings from the day he had left Jessie's mother, under circumstances not yet clear to her, until the meeting with John Harbuckle in the Tower Subway. During that long conversation she had once tried to approach the real heart of the subject, but Arthur Bayliss had gently talked away from it.

"Whatever it is, she—Jessie's mother —would have forgiven him; and I'm sure I do. He brings back—ah, but how slightly!— he brings back my James, and that's more than all to me."

So Mary determined to be very kind to him. John Harbuckle, whom she could never quite forgive for taking her from Birrendale, was more than once or twice seized with pangs of jealousy, and felt, as it were, chronically hurt. John Harbuckle could not help seeing, that in

comparison to Arthur Bayliss he himself was simply nobody to Mary.

Mary drove her brother out early next morning to go and prowl about and see what he could find very nice for breakfast, and the old bachelor, always an admirable caterer (married men may smile incredulously, but I will maintain this as a fact), the old bachelor, I repeat, returned in due time with a bag full of the most delicious "examples" that the different markets could supply, including roses for the table and the personal adornment of the girls.

The roses were just the very match for Jessie's cheeks, as she sat, with Mac's newly-arrived letter in her pocket, looking towards Catherine Court, whence, every moment, she expected her father to emerge.

Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright, but her hands were icy cold, although the sun was already strong.

At last there he was; she flew downstairs to give him the first welcome. Fairer than ever she looked to him; but even as he hurried to meet her, that dreadful shadow, that "Arnold Birkett," seemed to be standing between them. But Jessie lifted her face right through the shadow she had never seen, and her father bent through it and kissed her.

Jessie was very merry that morning. Her father had not vanished into thin air; she was delighted to see him again.

During breakfast her tongue ran on and on as if it would never stop.

Her father promised to take the girls to the theatre in the evening; that was another new delight to her, for uncle John had never taken them to a theatre.

"Can you spare me half an hour?" asked Arthur Bayliss, looking across the table to John Harbuckle, when breakfast was finished; "I should be glad if you could come round to my office in Fenchurch Avenue at once; but if you can't, suppose we say at five o'clock?"

"Why not stay here and talk?" put in the widow, who was anxious to detain him as long as possible.

"I'm at your service now," said John Harbuckle, quietly.

"You'll dine with us of course, Arthur?" said Mary, as the two men rose to leave.

"Well no, not to-day; thank you all the same."

"We'll have it early for the girls, you know," said Mary.

"I'll call for them in good time. In the meanwhile, perhaps Jessie will look over the

paper and see if she and Alison can hit upon a play that will suit them both."

"Yes! Yes!" said Jessie. "But mayn't I come and see your office?"

"Let us all go!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss, in a tone so gushing that it made Jessie say to herself: "I suppose they all think he belongs to them; but they'll soon find out he belongs only to me."

"Time's running on," said John Harbuckle.

"Well," said the widow, "I suppose we mustn't intrude upon business hours." But she relinquished the idea of seeing the brother-in-law's place with evident reluctance.

"I think you might let me come with you, father," said Jessie, as if a little hurt.

"Presently, my darling. You'll be ready in good time this evening? Poor child!"—for she clung to him—"do you think I won't come back? Of course I will. Do you suppose I don't want to see how pretty you're going to look this evening? There! there! Good-bye!"

He tried to speak lightly, and he laughed, and nodded at the little group that was watching him from the door, but he felt terribly ill at ease as he adjusted his long stride to John Harbuckle's slower and shorter step.

They were soon among the men who were now arriving from all quarters. Arthur Bayliss, had he been alone, would have walked along at the same brisk, business-like rate as the majority of his fellow pedestrians; but John Harbuckle had acquired an habitual saunter, and whether he trod the City pavement on a Sunday, when he had it nearly all to himself, or on a week-day morning, when he shared it with busy thousands, he never varied his pace.

The two men, so dissimilar in every particular, walking side by side, and talking only on such topics as the alterations that Bayliss noticed, came in a few minutes to Fenchurch Avenue.

"Which," said Arthur Bayliss, "seems to me newer than anything else I have yet met with; it suggests to me, indeed, New York rather than London. I was never more surprised than when I came for the first time up that narrow little dark turning out of Fenchurch Street, and found myself here, where Fen Court used to be."

New enough it certainly was, for buildings were still in process of erection, and old ones of demolition.

The church-yard of the vanished church of St. Gabriel occupied one corner. It had been recently fresh gravelled—it was neatly swept

and garnished, and owned a few green trees. A broad asphalt pavement ran from it right up to great tall blocks of new offices, as handsome as polished granite and plate glass could make them. An old house or two, with narrow windows and semi-circular porticos, like inverted shells, although nearly squeezed out of existence by its modern neighbours, still lingered on here and there; suggesting by a certain domesticity in its architecture that homes had once been made in the heart of the City.*

"My friend Woolcomb's father used to live in that house they're pulling down," said John Harbuckle. "It was an interesting example of a London merchant's house; there was some undoubted Jacobean work in it. Which is your place? Why, bless me!—there's Robbins!"

"Do you know that fellow? He's the brother of our caretaker," said Arthur Bayliss.

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* I have to confess with shame that when this passage was written I had not read Mrs. Riddell's masterpiece, "George Geith." The description of Fen Court, as it was in George Geith's time, "As quiet and forsaken-looking a spot as the heart of man could desire to see, where the houses and the trees make a shade even at mid-day," struck me as so picturesque a contrast to the Fenchurch Avenue of the present, that I cannot help referring to it here. Fen Court now exists only in "George Geith;" "the house which stood next but one to the old gate-way on the Fenchurch Street side," on the second floor of which George Geith and his sweet Beryl lived, has shared the fate of that belonging to the father of John Harbuckle's friend Woolcomb.

"Is he though?" observed John Harbuckle with interest. "And are you 'the party' for whom he's looking up a sideboard?"

"Well, I did say something about it, I believe. I've taken the top rooms here, as I've already told you."

"Bless me! Dear, dear, dear me! Then, it was about your sideboard I went over to Bermondsey yesterday. What a very strange coincidence!"

"A very fortunate one, since it led to our meeting. Curiosity took me down the Subway," said Bayliss. "Is the thing worth having?"

"At a price; it is genuine, but not a fine work. What does he ask?"

"So much."

"Too much. Offer him such a sum; he'll take it."

"All right, then; I'll make it rather over that under the happy circumstances."

"Well, Robbins, you didn't get my card this morning," said John Harbuckle, stepping up to his late factotum.

"No, sir; I were just a-coming on to you. But," lowering his voice, "blest if that ain't the party!—that's the Mr. Birkett it's for. Did you see it, sir?"

"My friend will give you so much for the

sideboard; that's more than it's worth," said John Harbuckle.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Robbins, as if with horror, "why the man over the water'll charge me that!"

"I don't think so," observed John Harbuckle, in his driest tone. "Well, there's the offer; you can do what you like with it."

"I suppose I must take it, as Mr. Birkett's likely to want something else," said the crestfallen Robbins.

"Very well; you'll not lose by it. Good day," said John Harbuckle, and he followed Arthur Bayliss into the hall of one of the new houses, saying to himself:

"Birkett! What does he mean? What's that on the plate, 'Arnold Birkett and Co.?' What's that on the office door?—'Arnold Birkett.'"

They passed through a large, well-appointed office, where a couple of clerks were at work, into the private room.

"Who is Arnold Birkett?" John Harbuckle asked, when they were together in the room and the door had been closed.

"I am," said Arthur Bayliss. "Sit down, Harbuckle, that's what I want to talk to you about. I don't know what to do."

There was a comfortable chair on each side

of the new desk-table; the two men sat down opposite each other. John Harbuckle noticed, and it touched him, how haggard Bayliss's face grew as he spoke. He looked across anxiously, as if waiting for further confidence.

"You see now why I didn't want the others to come here until you had been. God knows how much I want to be free from that wretched name and all it means," Bayliss went on.

"Can't you drop it?" asked John Harbuckle.

Arthur Bayliss told him about as much as you know already.

"No; I don't see how I can; at least not yet awhile. I've made such a splendid start here; if I can only keep up the pace for a year or two I may be able to make everything square. You will believe me when I say I am above everything anxious to set myself right with the world. In the meanwhile, how am I to have Jessie here?"

"Jessie's going to be married," said John Harbuckle.

"That's in the future," said Jessie's father; "that may never happen. Look here," he went on, rising as he spoke, "if I get talking about these matters I shall be quite unfit for business. I wanted you to come here now, because I didn't like the idea of any of you

hearing of it second-hand. Can you look in at five o clock? I've a press of business to-day that I must get through somehow, although I feel more dead than alive. Harbuckle"—he hesitated, and grew paler—"come at five, I'll tell you all, I must tell some one, or I shall go mad. I can't tell Jessie, nor Mary. Come at five. Here's Tildesley and another man. You'll be here at five precisely?—you won't keep me waiting, will you?"

There was an urgent appeal in the last question that went straight to John Harbuckle's heart; he was very sorry for Arthur Bayliss.

"At five precisely," he replied, firmly, and left the office.

"He killed her," said John Harbuckle, as he faced the swept and garnished churchyard in Fenchurch Avenue, "I see it in his face! he killed her! God help him and me too!"

CHAPTER XI.

JESSIE AS A PERSON OF IMPORTANCE.

IT was all one bewilderment to Mary and the girls in the old-fashioned house in Trinity Square after the men had departed.

Jessie, who had been quiet and subdued yesterday evening, was now in that state of excitement when a girl talks a great deal of nonsense. At the end of half-an-hour, occupied by talking and, during lucid intervals, by arranging her own and Alison's toilette for the evening, Jessie had talked herself into the position of a person of importance.

"Now, eminent literary woman," she began, as she tried on the lace she had half made up her mind to wear; "now, authoress, now is your time for making studies of a real, undoubted, genuine heroine! I told you I always knew I was born to be a heroine! Now for your novel, Alie. (I say—shall I dye this with tea or saffron or keep it as it is? Very pale saffron, with flowers to match, eh? like that girl we

saw at St. James's Hall last Monday; that will do best, won't it?). Yes, Alie, do *me* well, my child, and your fortune's made! Will you just put down those old dry-as-dust books and give the whole of your gigantic intellect to me. You know I'm immensely proud of you, I've told my father you're the cleverest girl in London, so you must sustain your reputation. Will you, or won't you make a study of me? Will you do me—me with a father come to life again, or are you going to throw away the finest chance ever presented to any scribbling woman on this round earth? What! Oh, I'm nothing compared to the Tower, I suppose! The blindness—the blindness of some people I could mention! Well, I mean to be written about, so if you won't do it—I'll just do it myself. Now, if poor Mac Carruthers were here, wouldn't I make him mount Pegasus! and wouldn't I make his Pegasus go! but as for you, Alison—it makes me savage to think I can't drive you. You're just the only person in the world I can't drive. I often wonder what sort of a mind you can have. Something very different from mine!"

"Yours! Why you haven't one. The idea of your having a mind!"

"Haven't I! My father thinks I have, I

can tell you. Just the sort of mind a woman ought to have, he says; and he ought to know; he's been about the world a great deal and used his eyes."

"And his eye-lashes," remarked Alison. She could not resist saying it; but she felt immediately that under the circumstances it was a trifle too sarcastic.

Jessie, however, did not think so; she at once launched out into extravagant praises of her father's looks and ways, which resulted in Alison's recalling so vividly the grave beside the Birren Water that tears came into her eyes; so that Jessie had to throw away her finery and embrace her cousin and cry too. Presently, smiles and nonsense having returned, a cabinet council was held, at which it was proposed by Jessie, and seconded by Alison, that the saffron lace would not be worthy of the occasion, and that they had not a decent pair of gloves between them.

"Can we conscientiously say we must have something fresh?" asked Jessie, with immense solemnity.

"We can," returned Alison, decisively.

"Beautiful, beautiful thing, I shall have to part with you!" said Jessie, addressing a crisp five-pound note her father had just given her "to get any little odds and ends she might want."

Jessie gazed at the note with fond admiration; it made her father feel real to her, and it also made her feel extremely rich; for seldom before this had she possessed more than half-a-crown at a time; and since uncle James's death even the half-crowns had come very rarely. Uncle John never gave Jessie money, although through Mrs. Bayliss he paid for a good many things for her.

"We'll just go and lavish it!" said Jessie; "for once in my life I should like to know the sensation! And, Alison, I must make you look really nice to-night!"

"Oh, never mind me! said Alison. "Besides, I can't run to more than eight three-farthings."

"No, because you've been spending all your money on me! Never mind, I'm going to pay you out for it now!"

So the two girls had a most delightful walk to St. Paul's Churchyard, where they looked in at all the shops, and where Jessie changed the first five-pound note she had ever owned with a feeling of having suddenly become one of the most important persons in Her Majesty's dominions; a feeling which above all she enjoyed.

In the afternoon, however, her head ached dreadfully, and she was glad to lie down for a couple of hours. It was a trouble to her to

write even a few lines to Mac; she began a note, but it was not easy to tell him in a dozen words what had happened. So after she had written, "My dearest Mac, I have something to tell you which will surprise you very much," she could go no further, and no note was sent that day. It was the first time she had missed writing to him.

"Thank God for the daily work that must be done!" exclaimed John Harbuckle, devoutly, on his return to his office, where he found several men waiting for orders, a pile of letters to read and answer, and a reminder that there was an urgent affair demanding immediate attention.

"Thank God for daily work!" From how many aching hearts do the words ascend every hour of every day, with thanks not only for the daily bread the daily work brings, but for the daily work that enables them to live through their daily sorrow. Men and women who hated the morning light that brought with it a fresh sense of bereavement, or calamity, rise to find their daily task awaiting them, and as the hours go by the crushing load of grief grows less, until, if they cannot smile at their work, they can at least be calm, for:

> "God in cursing gives us better gifts
> Than man in benediction."

That daily work that *must* be done, it meets us in the morning like a terrible and imperious tyrant; but its very tyranny is its value. So felt Arthur Bayliss after he and John Harbuckle had parted. It was dreadful to him to have to set to work, but it helped him to get through the day; and there are days in the lives of all of us that it seems we could hardly live through without such help.

This was one of them to him.

"At five precisely? You'll not keep me waiting?"

Arthur Bayliss's last words had sounded to John Harbuckle like the patient's appeal to the surgeon who is coming to perform a ghastly operation, or like Anne Boleyn's, "I pray you despatch me quickly," to the headsman over yonder on the Tower Green, just the other side of the little church, whose quaint belfry John Harbuckle saw from his own doorstep when he left home that evening to keep his appointment.

The first of the neighbouring clocks struck five as the old bachelor entered the narrow passage that leads from Fenchurch Street to the Avenue; the last had not finished striking when he again read on the well-polished brass plate the name, "Arnold Birkett."

At the porter's desk in the hall was Mr. 'Jim' Robbins, who informed him that Mr. Birkett was upstairs and would be glad to see him at once.

It was a very long way up to the top of the tall house, but at last John Harbuckle reached the room and Arthur Bayliss.

The room was large and well proportioned, full of glaring light from the uncurtained windows, but containing little else except a sofa, a table and a couple of chairs.

Arthur Bayliss was pacing up and down in a state of desperate excitement.

"You're punctual," he exclaimed, throwing his cigar into the grate, "I couldn't have stood this much longer."

"I've come as you requested me to do," said John Harbuckle, quietly, taking a chair; "but, remember, I have no wish to force your confidence in any way."

"I must tell some one, I shall go mad if I don't! I must tell you!" said Bayliss, pulling at his moustache in extreme agitation, and still walking about. "It was not a premeditated act. I had no thought of it; I never dreamed of such a thing until the very moment. God left me, the Devil tempted me; I was distracted, mad, I saw a chance, the Devil must have shown it me. I rushed at it at once--

like a moth at a candle—it was done beyond recall before I had time to think."

He spoke in abrupt sentences, pacing up and down the while, and talking on as if rather to himself than to his visitor.

"We were so happy at first," he went on; "she loved me so—she was everything, all the world to me—our little girl was so sweet to both of us. It was too good to last; it seems like heaven to look back upon—my life's been hell ever since. Then my brother James got into trouble (he always was in tronble, poor fellow), I had to help him out of it. Then, as you will remember, there was the bank failure. Nothing went right after that. I ought to have stopped sooner, perhaps, but I was so proud of our firm, we had done so well—I struggled on and on, grew more and more involved, knew bankruptcy was inevitable. Things became desperately bad; I had one hope—I didn't know the world then as I do now, or I shouldn't have been fool enough to entertain it—but I had one last hope. There was a man in Paris, the head of a large house there; I had made that man, I had helped him (I was always too ready to help others; much good has it done me!), I had helped that man, Harbuckle, I had helped him at a crisis when not any other creature would

lend him a pound; I said to myself after I had written in vain, 'If I go and see him he must come to the rescue now.' I was afraid, not knowing from one day to the next what might happen, to leave my wife and child in Liverpool, I took them with me as far as Boulogne. I went to Paris, I saw that man." He paused, and for the moment could not speak, then with a fierce gesture, as if he were flinging the man violently from him, he went on, "What's the use of talking of it? That hope, my last, like all else, was rotten and failed me. I returned to Boulogne, to Jessie, and our little girl. I saw them, they tried to soothe me. Jessie, poor darling, broken-hearted as she was, tried hard to give me hope again. I could not endure the sight of them, it was torture, pure and simple, to be with them. We were to return to Liverpool in the evening. I knew there was no hope, that my last chance was gone, that I must meet my creditors, that I had scarcely anything to offer them; it seemed to me worse than death. Yet I ought to have gone on; if I had only been brave, I might have righted myself as other men have done. But I was a coward, and the Devil knew I was! I could not endure to look at the wife and child whom I had ruined. And yet it was hardly my fault, after all; I had striven

my hardest, and up to that time I had done nothing wrong. I walked about the streets of that wretched town for hours, because I could not face them. It has always been my curse that I could never face distress. At last—how horribly distinct it all is to me still!—at last I went for refuge and rest, for I was nearly worn out, into the reading-room in the old Museum there. I can see it all now, the French soldier reading a yellow-covered book, the old curator munching an apple; there was no one else there. I took up an English paper, there were several on the table; I did not read it, I could not see a word, until, at last, out of the meaningless print there arose—and the type seemed to grow gigantic as I looked at it—my own name—Arthur Bayl'ss!—It was among Ihe deaths. My attention was at once aroused. t hurried through the announcement and in another instant, as if by a flash of lightning, a way of escape was revealed. You saw the announcement, I dare say?"

"Under the date of the 7th of April?" asked John Harbuckle. "I saw it."

"Would to heaven *I* had *not* seen it!" exclaimed Arthur Bayliss. "A man of my name was lost, with many others, in the foundering of the African mail steamer,

'Mellicurrie.' He was a Liverpool man; the steamer was lost off the Wexford Coast; she sailed the day I had left England. Everything fitted exactly; I saw at once what I could do—I must have been mad—I believe I was; what I did had that sure, unerring swiftness that accompanies some forms of madness. I went out, bought black-edged paper and money orders; wrote to the English papers, paid for three more insertions of the notice, to contain, in addition to the one I had read, *my own Liverpool address in full.* I repeat, I must have been mad to have done such a thing; but, mad as I was, I was only too successful—I, who had failed so desperately in my lawful strivings, succeeded now. Every farthing I had in the world was in my pocket. I sent the greater part of it to my wife. I wrote—I don't know how—a letter to her, I told her all, I implored her, by her love to me, to appear in Liverpool in widow's weeds. I told her I was going to Africa, the only place where I knew I should be sure to find employment at once. I told her that in a few months I should be able to send for her; I tried to paint a lovely, peaceful home in Madeira, where she would grow well and strong, and where I could see her sometimes. Ah! It was that pictured home in Madeira that

lured me on—no, no—perhaps it was not—it was my own cowardice, my dread of facing exposure!—but I could let her face it! I was mad—I could not have done such a thing had I been sane, I who would have thought nothing of risking my life for her. I went to Africa, I found work; I made money—but all too late—too late to save her! I have let Time pay my debts; I have returned. That's all I have to say. The rest you know as well—better—than I." And Arthur Bayliss—who had paused for a moment, while he had uttered the last sentence, turned abruptly and went out on to the little balcony in front of the open window.

When Bayliss had begun his narrative, John Harbuckle's clear blue eyes had followed him in his pacings up and down the room with a peculiarly keen, penetrating glance. As the tragedy in which he was himself so deeply interested was hurriedly unfolded, he turned away from the speaker. With his arms resting on his knees and his hands tightly clasped in front of them, he bent forward and looked intently on the floor.

After Bayliss had finished, John Harbuckle retained the same position for some time; but his eyes were closed, his hands more tightly clasped, his brow drawn and

deepened, his usual fresh colour gone; his bowed grey head looking altogether greyer and older than it had done when he had met Arthur Bayliss, twenty-four hours ago, in the Tower Subway.

It was not in him then to feel again the agitation that had seized him when first the sound of that voice had hurried him wildly along the path above the moat, exclaiming:

"He robbed me of my Jessie! Here in these very gardens!"

He had heard that voice now going on and on; but it had not been to him like a voice, so much as the solemn unfolding of the mystery that had surrounded that Jessie's death. It was all so past—so irrevocable, so beyond human help now; its very hopelessness brought calm.

"Have you nothing to say?" presently asked Arthur Bayliss from the balcony, in the tone of wild despair he had used all along.

"Nothing," replied John Harbuckle, only his lips moving.

He sat motionless with his head bowed. He knew that other man was there; he knew—the very words passed through his brain—that man had tortured to death his Jessie, the Jessie they had both loved, using her conscience as the weapon to kill her with; her

face, so full of bewildered anguish—her face as he had last seen it—was gazing at him with horror now. That man was a coward—that man had put her to a cruel death; but that man's heart and life were broken. That man had confided in him—trusted him. It was not possible to reprove him now, neither was it possible to speak to him friendly words.

John Harbuckle rose, put on his hat and slowly walked out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE THEATRE.

"IF Mac could only see me!" said Jessie, as she stood before the glass, giving a few last touches to her toilette.

Jessie was quite astonished at herself, never before had she seen her image looking so beautiful. She hardly recognized herself, and yet she was certain that what she looked at was the reflection of Jessie; but it was Jessie idealized, etherealized, the Jessie of a poem or of a picture; not the work-a-day Jessie, who had made scones in Birrendale, nor the merely festive Jessie, who had danced the Highland Schottische with Mac at the ball where they had first met.

This was a Jessie seen under the exquisite light and shade of emotions too absorbing to be concealed as different from any other Jessie as the Tower, seen under a summer moonlight, or twilight, or on a spring morning, half-veiled in wreaths of mists, is from the same Tower on a grey prosaic day at noon.

Jessie was vain, her vanity was pleased, but to-night she rather stood in awe of herself, of her position, of everything. For the time even her merry tongue wagged not.

At the appointed hour her father arrived. Jessie gave one look at Alison, whose appearance more than compensated her for the care she had bestowed upon her—and another at herself, and went downstairs in her only long skirt, a pale grey silk, John Harbuckle's gift.

She came into the drawing-room in her floating silk and her soft laces and faint blush roses with a strange mingling of self-consciousness and dreamy unreality in her expression; her bright eyes more dewy than usual, her lips curving with a trembling smile.

"Am I—can I be the owner of so much beauty?" asked her father, stepping towards her.

But the words failed to flatter her. Her heart, her face chilled with anxiety—the curve of her lips straightened.

"Father! how ill you look! What has happened?"

"Yesterday tried me very much, my darling," he said, kissing her.

"And me too," she said, with a sigh, and for an instant her head sank upon his shoulder. Then Mrs. Bayliss came in. Her brother-in-

law's appearance struck her. He was looking wretchedly ill, his eyes were dim, his face a faded yellow; but his beard and moustache curled as crisply as ever; and she thought that since her husband's death she had not seen a man with so fine a figure as his looked in his evening clothes.

And here I may say that her affection for her husband made her unjust to his brother. James Bayliss had lacked both the finish and one of the inches of Arthur, Jessie's father.

It was not often that Mrs. Bayliss looked at her daughter with approval, but she nodded and smiled this evening, when Alison appeared, in almost the same dress as Jessie's, only her roses were darker.

"Where's uncle John?" asked Alison, looking round the room.

"Oh, he's writing to Mr. Woolcomb, or to some other of his old fossils," said Mrs. Bayliss. "He wouldn't care to be disturbed."

"It's getting late; we had better start at once," said Arthur Bayliss, uneasily. "Come, Jessie," and he laid her hand on his arm, as if to walk away with her.

"Wait one minute," cried Alison, and ran up to John Harbuckle's den.

"Uncle John! uncle John! We're going!" she called at the door.

"Come in, my dear," said he, and Alison went in.

John Harbuckle was not writing, he was reading the Gospel according to St. Luke; that third Gospel, the symbol of which devout minds have seen in the third living creature of Revelations, that had a face as of a man; the Gospel of the Son of Man.

He looked grave, sad, old. Alison was for a moment sorry she had disturbed him.

"You look very nice, my dear, very nice," he said, turning round and surveying his niece. Alison thought he seemed so sad and lonely that her heart smote her that she was going to leave him alone; for she knew he would not go downstairs to his sister; she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"They are waiting. I must go. I wish I might stay at home with you," she said, hurriedly.

"Don't keep them, Alison. Good-bye, my dear," he said. "You look very nice. I shall think of you."

He spoke so seriously, Alison felt quite touched.

"What has happened to uncle John?" she asked herself, as she ran downstairs.

Now Jessie and, in a lesser degree, Alison,

appreciated the way in which Arthur Bayliss took them out.

It was a great satisfaction to Jessie to find that her father approved of evening dress for evenings. It had been so long since she had worn it that it was quite an event. Uncle John had taken them to concerts now and then; but he never made a change in his own dress, and expected them to go in their walking jackets.

Jessie could not but feel that her father in this respect showed himself a very superior person. Also, he did not propose they should go by train, neither did he merely send for a cab, but drove round for them in a brougham. Evidently Jessie's father knew the ways of the world, and the proper methods of taking girls about. What a delightful thing to find oneself suddenly the owner of such a father!

"And, indeed," she said in her heart, as they drove down Tower Hill, "I can't wonder that my poor little mother preferred him to uncle John. Really, I don't see how she could help it! I think Mac will like him! I feel sure Mac will like him! I hope they will get on well together! Why shouldn't they? Of course they will. Dear Mac, it was too bad of me not to have written to him to-day! To-morrow he shall have a long, long letter."

"Imagine my really going to the theatre again with you!" she said, aloud. "It doesn't seem real, does it? I can't believe it!" And Jessie, when they were fairly *en route*, began to talk a great deal of nonsense, and again feel herself a very important person, and behave as one. Her father laughed at her rubbish, listened to it as if half fascinated; and indeed the finest wit had never seemed so charming to him.

So they went to the theatre and had a box, and saw—for Arthur Bayliss would not risk having his feelings more harrowed than they were already—an opera bouffe.

This was Arthur Bayliss's first appearance in any place of amusement since his return.

His ideals of right and wrong were the ideals of his boyhood, so he was not long in regretting he had brought the girls to that theatre.

They laughed, innocently enough; when they laughed he scowled.

He had had abundant opportunity of studying the morals of actual life, both on the West Coast of Africa and elsewhere; but his ideal of what morals ought to be was based upon the teaching of his mother and the examples of his late sisters and wife.

Consequently, he was extremely shocked at

everything. The poor dear girls, however, who had had but few opportunities of studying human nature, saw no harm in anything, and enjoyed the novelty of the whole scene very much.

Of course Jessie sat next to her father. Sometimes she turned round suddenly to him, and gave him the full benefit of her eyes and smiles; sometimes he bent towards her and whispered a remark, generally about the abominable dress or coiffure of the period, of which there were only too many examples present; when he did so his action and attitude, seen from a distance, might have been easily mistaken for a lover's; there was about it as little as possible of the paternal. This perhaps, was, under the circumstances, not only excusable, but natural. Arthur Bayliss, in his memory, cherished a fond paternal affection for "his little girl," which he could not immediately transfer—at any rate as to outward form—to the beautiful young woman sitting by his side.

There was a man in the stalls who found the ladies on the stage hardly as interesting as those who were off it. He was rather—indeed very much—struck with Jessie. He began to speculate as to the relationship between her and the man who was with her,

and who paid so little attention to the other girl in the box.

"Should you say they were engaged or just married?" he asked himself; and then he pointed out the couple to his companion, whose eyes had been hitherto mostly on the stage, and who was laughing heartily, and as if he had not a care in the world, as, indeed, at that moment he had not; for all day long he had been telling himself he was the happiest man in the world. It was his last laugh, poor fellow, for many and many a day to come!

With his face still beaming, the young fellow raised his merry eyes to the box. At that moment Arthur Bayliss leaned towards Jessie, Jessie turned with unusual vivacity and looked up into his face with a radiant smile—she was enjoying herself so very much.

"Ah! if Mac could only see me now," Jessie had said, as she looked at herself in the glass just before starting.

Her wish had come true: the young man over whose honest face rushed a burning flush as he saw those two together was Mac Carruthers.

And she was thinking of him at that very moment; and all the evening long she had been planning that letter she meant to write to him to-morrow; and in spite of all other

emotions and pleasure and the more so the more her feelings were moved, rang through her heart:

"Together, for ever; for ever; together—with Mac—with Mac—with Mac, for ever."

And Mac was there; and Mac's face burned and paled, and his heart turned faint and then fierce; and Jessie sat there smiling by her father's side, and never knew that one roof covered her and Mac Carruthers.

"If Mac could only see me!"

Ah! if Jessie could but have known what was to come of his seeing her, how earnestly would she have besought Heaven that Mac might not see her then!

But Mac had seen her; he had come in with his companion very late, he had seen her and the man with the too lover-like ways, and all his future, and her future with his, was to feel that he had seen her. Poor Mac, how his face burned with fury! How suddenly his last laugh was stopped!

CHAPTER XIII.

JESSIE ON TIP-TOES.

"COME, Jessie," said Arthur Bayliss, with more authority than he had assumed before towards his newly-found daughter.

Jessie was unused to any authority except her own, for even with her aunt she generally had her own way; that imperious inflection of the voice made her feel that she must obey.

She was just then too happy for resentment, but she did not quite like obedience.

"It's nearly over," she said, as if reluctant to leave before the very end.

"We've had more than enough of it. Come!"

And he rose. There was nothing but for Alison and Jessie to rise too.

They had both been absorbed in the grotesque fun of the final scene which was then in progress. They looked at the stage and listened to the sparkling music to the very last moment they were allowed to remain. It was the first time they had been in a theatre since

the pantomime days before Captain Bayliss had taken Cauldknowe—it was all very fresh and delightful to them. The stage, I repeat, held them to the last, so that they never saw the young man in the stalls who was frantically trying to make for them. Their box was empty before he reached it.

He was too late. Mac and Jessie were destined not to meet that night.

"I'm infinitely disgusted!" exclaimed Arthur Bayliss, with virtuous indignation, as soon as they were safely in the brougham again.

"'Twas infinitely amusing," retorted Jessie, laughing.

"I'm shocked to hear you say so," said her father, sternly. "One excuses that sort of thing in savages, but to come back to one's own country—that one has fondly believed to be a civilized, Christian country, and find it publicly encouraged, is more disgusting than anything I can imagine."

"I'm sure, father, I didn't see anything shocking or wrong; I shouldn't have laughed at it if I had. It was only very funny," said Jessie.

"I don't know what you've all been doing while I've been away," said Bayliss. "But it now appears to be proper to flaunt in the faces of decent people whatever used to be con-

sidered most improper. Well, I know for the future I shall take very good care not to come with you to any play I haven't first seen myself."

"I'm sure I shouldn't have thought it was wicked if you hadn't told me, father," said Jessie. "I don't think it's done me much harm; even now, I don't know what was so shocking in it."

"Bad tone, bad tone, very bad tone! You, Alison, must feel so, I'm sure."

"Now I come to think of it—yes," said Alison. "But it was very amusing."

Then Arthur Bayliss, who was exceedingly wretched about other matters, attacked the manners and dress of the period with very bitter sarcasm:

"In fact," he said, in conclusion, "you were about the only two girls in the whole place I should care to have been seen with, and I'm not sure that Jessie does not frizzle her hair a great deal too much over her eyes. I remember sitting behind my sister once at a concert and noticing the exquisite neatness of her head. There wasn't a hair awry, it was as smooth as satin; but gentlewomen were in those days unmistakable gentlewomen; they might be taken for actresses or milliners, or in fact anything now."

So he growled the whole way down by Tower Hill; Mrs. Bayliss came to the door to let them in; but the girls at that time were feeling so suppressed that they hardly dared to tell her how much they had enjoyed themselves.

"You'll come upstairs?" said Mary Bayliss to her brother-in law.

"Where is Harbuckle?" asked Arthur Bayliss.

"I suppose he's up in his den," Mary returned. "I've seen nothing of him all the evening."

"Never turn antiquary, never be an earthworm or a book-worm, father," said Jessie, brightly, turning to him, with a whimsical smile.

"Not I, my darling," he exclaimed, with that sudden and recognizably pleasant light coming for one instant into his eyes, as he glanced at his daughter's upturned face.

It faded as quickly as it came.

"Mary, I think I must speak to Harbuckle for a moment or two. Perhaps I'd better say good-night to you all now."

"You'll be round to breakfast?" asked Mary.

"Well—" and he hesitated.

"Oh yes, do come!" said the others in chorus.

"Well—I think you'd better not expect me to-morrow. You see," he added, pleasantly, "that now I'm living in the City I am in the position of the proverbial early bird; and of course, you know, it's the duty of the early bird to pick up the first crumb. I'm hoping to secure a particularly fine large crumb to-morrow morning before the other birds get to town. Good-night! Good-night!" And he sprang up a few stairs; then stopped an instant to call back to Mrs. Bayliss: "The girls look very nice, don't they, Mary? They do you credit; they are the only nice girls I've seen this evening, or indeed since I've returned. Good-night!"

Arthur Bayliss slackened his speed before he reached the flight of stairs leading to John Harbuckle's new den.

John Harbuckle heard his foot on the stairs and opened the door.

"Are you at work?" asked Arthur Bayliss, looking towards the open door by which Harbuckle was standing.

"Come in," said the bachelor, slowly measuring out the two syllables.

"Thanks."

"I have been looking out some prints of old London I thought would interest Alison," said John Harbuckle, removing an armful of

papers from the chair that was standing near his own. "Sit down, Bayliss."

"Thanks," Bayliss repeated, taking the proffered chair, while John Harbuckle placed the prints and papers on the top of an already overcrowded bureau, turning his back upon his visitor as he did so.

"What am I to do about my daughter?"

Arthur Bayliss hurried out the words, purposely avoiding the name, "Jessie."

"In what way?" asked John Harbuckle, arranging the papers so that they might not topple over, as they seemed inclined to do, his back turned to Bayliss while he did so.

"She hasn't heard yet of Arnold Birkett. I can't tell her. It's an absolute impossibility! I can't tell her."

"You wish me to do so?"

Two or three loose pages fluttered to the floor. John Harbuckle stooped and picked them up.

"She must know. She'll be coming round to the office. She'll think she ought to live with me. She mustn't come without the others. Yes—if you would tell her you would be doing me a great service."

"How much am I to tell her?" asked John Harbuckle, turning slowly away from the bureau.

"I must leave it to you. As little as possible —not all about her poor mother."

"No, her memory must be kept sacred!"

"I leave it to you. You can understand—you do, I am sure—how anxiously I wish to appear not worse than I am in her eyes. Impress upon her (and I shall be able to second you there) how earnestly I am hoping and striving to do what is possible in the way of reparation."

"I will do my best. You will leave her here then for the present?"

"If you and Mary will allow it. And of course you will let me meet her expenses."

"We will take up that subject another time," said John Harbuckle, curtly.

"You will tell her to-morrow? I am anxious to have it settled at once."

"To-morrow, if possible. You are sure you can't tell her yourself? It would be better if you could, far better."

"I cannot; that is I might be laid up again for a fortnight if I did; and I can't afford that just now."

"Very well; I will do it."

"Thank you, Harbuckle. It will be a service I could ask of no other man."

"I regret you did not ask my help

years ago; but sorrow is useless now. Are you going? Good-night."

They shook hands very gravely, without any warmth or either side; for although Arthur Bayliss would have been glad to put much gratitude into his grasp, he felt it would meet with no response—and then they parted coldly; but could those men have been compelled to answer truly to the question, "Who is the one man in the world in whom you take the deepest interest?" their answer would have been: "Arthur Bayliss"—"John Harbuckle."

That night Arthur Bayliss avoided Catherine Court as he returned to his rooms. John Harbuckle, although his eyes were dry, wept long and bitterly in his heart.

Yet the following morning he was glad when he saw the two girls together at breakfast, and thought that Jessie was to be spared to them a little longer.

There was a note for Jessie that morning, as there had been every morning since she had been in London; but to-day it must have been a more delightful note than usual, so rosy and happy she looked.

We are permitted to know the contents of that note; but although we might use our liberty, I think we ought to respect Mac's terms of endearment; so we will leave them

all out. Of course, neither Mac nor Jessie would have liked our profane eyes to rest upon those sacred epithets which a stranger's glance must needs in some fashion rob of their charm. But neither Mac nor Jessie would have cared for all the world's knowing the special cause for gladness which had made the writer, to quote his own words, "the happiest being in creation." Poor Mac! He was miserable enough by the time those written words of his were making Jessie Bayliss the happiest girl in the City of London!

"Expect me as the clock strikes eleven!" wrote Mac. "We are going through to Paris. It is quite a sudden move. I have persuaded him to let me have a day in London, on purpose to see you. I have so much to talk to you about that I must have a long day to get through it in. You won't object, will you? Donaldson and I are getting on splendidly together. Nothing could well suit me better. I see Hope writ very large on everything. Remember, at eleven precisely to-morrow."

"To-morrow! which means, of course, to-day," said Jessie. "To-day is the to-morrow of yesterday! How glad I am I did not send that note. And what a sweet day it is! A perfect, perfect day! And Mac's to be here at eleven! Exactly as the clock strikes eleven!

I must make the place look very charming; and myself too! Dear old Mac! It is nine now! Only two hours, two very busy hours that will go by quickly, and exactly as the bugles sound at eleven there'll be Mac! Punctual?—of course he'll be punctual! The idea of Mac's not being punctual when he's coming to see me."

And in her own mind Jessie Bayliss began that "me" with a very large capital—a capital M that was just precisely of the very same size as the letter that stood first in Mac.

CHAPTER XIV.

ELEVEN PRECISELY.

A BONDED carman, whose van was standing before the door, sent up to request an interview with Mr Harbuckle ("the guvnor," he called him) at the very minute when Jessie, having read her letter, was about to announce the wonderful news that Mac was coming at eleven.

John Harbuckle therefore went downstairs at once; the girls had finished breakfast before he returned, and Mary, who had had a grumbling letter from her tenant at Cauldknowe, was so full of her own affairs that she forgot to mention Jessie's at all; so John Harbuckle began business that day without hearing of Mac's expected visit.

"Now Alison," said Jessie, all the housewife brightly dawning in her dewy hazel eyes, "now, Alison, there's a great deal to be done. We must go and drive Auntie up to ordering a much better lunch than yesterday's. We must take all these plants out into the yard

and wash them; we must have a regular fight against dust and smuts; you must go out and buy a great heap of flowers, and altogether we must freshen up the place a bit; for it's looking rather dingy; and really it's next to impossible to keep things clean here. Come along, let us get out those big blue jars into the yard, to begin with."

So down they both went to the landing and carefully inspected the broad-leaved plants, and then carried them out into the little triangular space hemmed in by high and smoke-begrimed walls, where they diligently sponged the india-rubber plants and aspodistræ.

It was a pretty sight to see those two girls at work in that little enclosure.

It was a great pity uncle John did not happen to know they were there; but he was a good deal occupied that morning, and had other things to think of.

Presently, while Jessie was re-arranging most of the furniture and knick-knacks in the drawing-room, Alison, obedient to her cousin's commands (and an engaged girl who is expecting her lover is an imperious despot, whose sway no unengaged girl would dare to question; Alison, too, was meek and ready to oblige even to a fault), first went out and

lavished an unheard of sum upon cut flowers, and then was driven out again, although the day was getting more than warm, to buy a fine new fern for the drawing-room table.

The drawing-room, by-the-bye, was now glorious in new carpet and curtains, and had an odour of oriental incense hovering about it, instead of the smell of varnish, as in the days when John Harbuckle and his faithful Robbins used to work there.

By the time all these arrangements had been completed, by the time the neatest of Sarah Janes had been compelled to put on her snowiest cap and apron, by the time Jessie had afresh fluffed up her hair and changed her dress and made Alison tidy, by that time it was so nearly eleven that Jessie took her knitting into the drawing-room and sat down on the window seat to wait three or four minutes for Mac's coming.

She sat where she could see, by getting very close to the open window, a little piece of the road along which Mac was to come.

"He is in Tower Street by this time," she said; "I've half a mind to go and meet him. But no, it won't do! one must maintain a certain amount of dignity. They are always far too conceited, it never does to let them know quite how fond one is of them. Dear

old Mac has perhaps as little of that sort of nonsense about him as any man can have; but it wouldn't do; indeed, I'm not quite certain whether I haven't let him have his own way too easily; but then I really am very fond of Mac, and he's had so many other worries. I wonder, now, is he turning round the corner by Barking Alley?"

And Jessie put her head out of the window as far as she safely could.

"Two minutes to eleven; I thought by his note he meant to be punctual to the moment. I don't see him anywhere, perhaps he has come the other way; perhaps he is the other side of the warehouses where I can't see him."

Passers-by were looking at her; she drew in her head.

"One minute to eleven."

She stealthily approached the window again and again looked along the road.

"He's evidently not going to be quite punctual," she said, "I thought he would be. Perhaps there is a block outside Cannon Street, if he has come by train; or he's in a cab somewhere and can't get on."

Bugles from the Tower. The earliest clock striking eleven

She put her head out of the window again.

No sign of Mac. The latest clock struck eleven.

"He shouldn't have made so much fuss about being to the moment, he should have said 'about eleven,'" thought Jessie, while a horrible pain shot through her heart.

Perhaps he would not come at all, it seemed to her that disappointment would be unbearable.

"It's ridiculous to be disappointed so soon when the streets are in such a state," said Jessie. But she felt suddenly dull and lonely. Alison had discretely kept away; Jessie went in search of her.

"Was there a great block in East Cheap when you were out just now, Alie?" she asked.

"Frightful," said Alison; "I saw several men get out of cabs and walk."

"Ah! then I daresay that is what's keeping Mac late."

"Why it's not five minutes past yet! He is sure to be here directly."

"I can't bear to be kept waiting one instant," said Jessie, petulantly. "If I'd have been Mac I'd have come half an hour too early and have waited about until the hour was just going to strike!"

"Jessie, you forget Mac isn't quite a free man!"

"How can you remind me of such a thing! What an abominable idea!"

"Well, but it's true! Business is business, you know!"

"No, I don't know; besides, isn't there a telegraph office in London?"

"Well, perhaps his interesting companion has had a fit, and Mac is sending wildly for doctors."

"There goes the quarter past! Oh! Alison, look out of the window, will you? Be careful: not too far! I wouldn't have him see either of us looking out for him upon any account! Is he coming?"

Poor Jessie, she tried hard to control her voice, but it trembled.

Oh! this first keen pang of disappointment, how was it to be borne? Alison had shaken her head; Mac was not yet in sight.

"Did you look at the date of his note; perhaps to-morrow means to-day's to-morrow; no, it couldn't well mean that either. It was written in Scotland, wasn't it?" suggested Alison, quite touched by Jessie's evident distress.

"Yes, yes! There's no mistake about the time he meant. I shall go out. Why should I wait in?"

"Well but, you know, all sorts of circumstances quite unforeseen"—began Alison.

"Oh, how I hate waiting!" exclaimed Jessie, and she retired to the drawing-room sofa, where she sat listening to every sound. There was the grinding of the heavy wheels, the noise of the City without, the summer breeze in the lace curtain near at hand, a street boy's shout now and again, the tread of feet beneath the window; the half-hour chimed—but no Mac came.

Jessie turned her face to the wall and felt she could not endure it.

Yet she lay still, neither speaking to the others when they came in, nor crying when they left. The three-quarters slowly came and passed, the long minutes dragged by, the bugles sounded from the Tower—the City clocks struck twelve.

Jessie sprang up and went into the dining-room:

"Alison, we'll go out! Come at once," she said, her usually pretty voice grown as set and hard as her features now looked.

They went upstairs and dressed.

"We won't go towards St. Paul's, Alie, we might meet him. Let us go some other way—along Fenchurch Street, perhaps?" said Jessie, as the two girls were on the doorstep. "No—there comes uncle John, I don't want to see him; come a few steps the other way."

But uncle John was already quite near. He and Alison had already recognized each other.

"He wishes to speak to us, I think," said Alison, and went towards him, Jessie following close behind.

"Going anywhere in particular?" asked uncle John.

"No, merely for a walk," said Alison. "It is so fine; and in the city there's always a shady side."

"I rather wanted to speak to Jessie for a minute," said uncle John, uneasily. "What do you say? Can you spare me a minute?"

"As many as you like!" returned Jessie, as if minutes, hours, days, were now alike valueless to her.

John Harbuckle glanced at her for an instant and perceived that there was something wrong.

"Then come into the office," he said, and they walked back together.

"I'll run up and speak to mother," said Alison, "I forgot to ask her if we could do anything for her."

"Yes, do, my dear!" said John Harbuckle, as they re-entered the house.

An elderly clerk was at work in the office; John Harbuckle, however, although he did

not indulge in a luxurious private room, had a counting-house to himself: not indeed furnished with comfortable chairs, after the manner of Arthur Bayliss's room in Fenchurch Avenue, but with an old fashioned high desk, and tall stools to match it.

"Yes, uncle John?" asked Jessie, as he closed the counting-house door.

"You don't look well," said John Harbuckle.

"My head aches," said Jessie, quietly. Then making an effort to appear at ease she perched lightly on one of the high stools.

"Well, uncle John, what is it?" she asked.

"I am afraid I may have to pain you," said John Harbuckle.

"You know why Mac hasn't come?" Jessie asked, with a strange look of sudden terror.

"I didn't know you were expecting him," said John Harbuckle, "were you?"

"He promised to be here at eleven, and now it's past twelve," said Jessie, simply, but very miserably.

"Oh, he'll be here presently! Don't worry yourself about it, he's sure to come. He would have sent if he were not coming; he'll be here directly. It was about your father, Jessie, I wish to speak to you. You know he

has been in very serious trouble, and still has many difficulties to contend with."

"I know," said Jessie, very clearly, but with a slower speech than usual. "I am very sorry, I must try to be all the kinder to him to make up for it."

"Indeed, he'll need all your help," said John Harbuckle, looking not at the slender young figure perched on the high stool, but at a page of an open account book. "A woman can help a man very much, you are too young to know how much."

"I thought I could guess, but perhaps I'm mistaken," said Jessie, a little dryly.

"Don't worry yourself about the young man, he's coming, depend upon it," said uncle John, with a slight smile.

"I'm not worrying myself," said Jessie.

The words had passed her lips before she could realize how untruthful they were.

"Tell me about my father," she went on, nervously.

"There have been some very unhappy circumstances connected with your father's absence," began John Harbuckle; "crooked things it will be a hard task to make straight. There is much that can never be undone But your father is an honourable man in the main, and with your help, Jessie, he may yet

be able to put himself right, to a certain extent, in the eyes of the world. I am afraid it will not all be pleasant for you."

"I don't care for pleasantness," said Jessie; "I don't care what I do or what I go without if I can only make him happy again."

"I am afraid neither you nor anyone else will ever be able to do that; but you may help him to make the best of very sad circumstances. Men, you know, Jessie, look to women to encourage them in doing the difficult right," said John Harbuckle, opening another of the heavy books that lay on the high desk by which he was standing, and peering into it.

"Do they?" asked Jessie, very softly, and her lips quivered a little. A strange, new feeling of responsibility touched her heart in spite of her distress and annoyance about Mac.

"Do these stronger, larger, rougher beings —these men—do they then depend so much on us? Is it true?" she asked herself. "Oh!" almost breaking down with the thoughts, "I did mean to be good to Mac; I did indeed!"

"Do they?" replied John Harbuckle. "Ah, Jessie! the right is very hard for a man to do without some woman's support and sanction! You see," he went on with a certain wistfulness

in his kindly smile, "you see what persons of importance you are."

"Yes," said Jessie, the tears gathering in her eyes, but not falling, "I'll try to be good, uncle John. Tell me now, what is the matter."

He never quite knew what he told her, or how he managed to make her understand about Arnold Birkett.

She listened in silence, colouring painfully; the colour grew hotter and hotter, until she felt the flush on her cheeks burning into them, and the tears had dried in her eyes.

She sat quite still for a minute, when John Harbuckle paused.

"I see it all," Jessie said, presently, quite quietly; "I see it all now." The fire in her cheeks paled and paled, until it died, leaving an ashen hue behind. Then she came down from the high stool and turned towards the door.

John Harbuckle opened it for her. He did not look at her until she had passed him. He followed her into the hall and watched her go up the stone stairs, with one hand pressed against her heart and the other on the balusters, on which she leaned heavily. He watched her until she disappeared behind the baize door.

"Poor child! poor child!" he said; "I'm

afraid—I'm afraid we've hurt her too much! I hardly thought she would have taken it so—she must have known a good deal of it all along! Poor darling, it has crushed her!" And after waiting a moment or two he cautiously went upstairs and, having found Alison alone in the drawing-room, told her, under his voice, that Jessie did not seem well.

Alison ran upstairs to the bed-room. The door was locked. She came back at once.

"It's only about Mac, uncle John," she said; "she's just disappointed, that's all. He's sure to come or send soon. But I'm very sorry! So nice as she'd made the place look, too! She'll be better alone. It will be all right when he comes."

"Well—perhaps so; but keep an eye upon her. I didn't like the look of her just now," and he silently withdrew.

Poor Jessie! She had gone slowly up the stone stairs and past the broad-leaved plants she had arranged that very morning with such care—never seeing them at all as she passed. Then she had, more slowly and heavily still, laboured up the next flight to her own room, locked the door, and dropped down on the bed, with her face against the pillows, moaning:

"God! God! Do let me die!—oh, do let me die at once!"

It was all clear to her now, Mac had heard what she had heard, and Mac had left her; Arnold Birkett had driven him away from her! Mac would never come back to her any more.

Mac was not used to such things; he had never been mixed up with them. He had heard it all, and he was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

SOON?

IT was a miserable luncheon without Mac and Jessie.

Mrs. Bayliss was grievously disappointed that Mac had not come; disappointed on her own account as well as on Jessie's; for she had taken a good deal of extra trouble about things, and was moreover longing to hear all about Birrendale and her tenants at Cauldknowe.

"What can have happened, mother?" asked Alison, at table.

"I'm almost beginning to fear something serious," returned Mrs. Bayliss. "Mac Carruthers is far too impetuous a young man to be kept from carrying out a plan on which he has set his heart by any trivial hindrance."

"If it had been serious you would have been sure to have heard of it by this time. The most probable cause is that Donaldson has been giving him trouble, and that just at the time he ought to have started Mac was too

much engaged with him either to be able to leave or send. You'll see him here presently with a very simple explanation. In the meanwhile I had better tell you that Jessie's distress is not wholly referable to his absence. I have had to tell her—her father commissioned me to tell her, and I suppose you are to be included—a piece of intelligence that has, together with this morning's disappointment, been too much for her."

Then he told them about Arnold Birkett.

They heard it in silence.

"Poor Jessie! No wonder she is so distressed," said Alison, after a long pause; but neither Alison nor her mother saw the connection between that unwelcome news and Mac's absence in the light in which Jessie saw it.

John Harbuckle was indisposed to talk or to discuss matters. He said what he had to say in the fewest words possible, and then went to his work again, Jessie's figure, which had suddenly looked as limp and powerless as if it had not one bone left in it, and the ashen grey of her face, haunting him all the way down to the East India Docks and back again.

The little household seemed totally disorganised.

Mrs. Bayliss sighed, sat with her hands folded, doing nothing, thinking, half with envy,

of that other woman who had sacrificed herself and her conscience for her husband's sake, and wondering what she would have done had it been her James instead of his brother.

"Her conscience killed her! I was right; I said it had. Would mine have killed me?" she asked herself the question, but her mind wandered away from the answer.

Alison, who usually had plenty to occupy her, could find nothing all the long afternoon except knitting to do. Books, Old London, the Tower, these things were not interesting to her to-day; her mind was too busy, and too oppressed.

She sat by the window, knitting, conscious that things were going wrong, wondering why Mac did not come, and watching every postman and telegraph boy, she saw; hoping that at least there would be some message she could take up to Jessie.

But the little Japanese tea table was set, and the tea made in one of uncle John's Wedgwood pots, the wearisome afternoon was waning. Alison once more looked out of the window towards Barking Alley; the plane-trees were brown and dusty, the great space opposite the warehouses was growing empty, the working day was nearing its close, but

there was no Mac anywhere, nor any message from him.

"It is very strange," said Alison to her mother. "Can he have suddenly disappeared like uncle Arthur? Are we to lose him, too, for eight years? I'm so sorry for Jessie! I had better take her up some tea."

She poured out a cup, and took it upstairs.

"Jessie dear, do open the door, there's a darling!" she called, after she had gently tapped at the door.

She waited for an instant; there was no sound, no reply.

"Jessie! Jessie!" called Alison, "do speak to me!"

Alison listening anxiously, thought she heard something like:

"Go away, please; I'm all right."

So she went downstairs again, feeling still more oppressed and troubled than before, but she little knew what a dreadful sense of the reality of her distress the sound of her voice had brought to Jessie.

Jessie had been lying there, so dazed, so stunned by the sudden blow, conscious that something terrible had happened, praying that she might be allowed to die at once, yet half hoping it was all but a hideous dream, until she had heard Alison calling; until the

fear in Alison's voice, as she repeated her name, told her that her cousin, her family, all the world knew what had happened.

It was so terrible: the blow had struck her, but she had not died; there was the dreadful world of kind, pitying relatives to be faced; there they were calling, "Jessie! Jessie!" and the earth would not swallow her up and hide her from them; God would not let her die!

"And I was so fond of Mac! And he—yes, I'm sure of it—he was so fond of me! And now it's all over, it's all over! He has heard what I have heard! he is afraid of being mixed up with it. And if he hadn't stopped away—stopped away! how could he? Is it possible he could be so mean? I can't believe it of him! And yet what else can it be?—it must be that! But if he had come, I should have had to give him up! I must have given him up! I couldn't be a disgrace to him!—no, no! I couldn't be a disgrace to him! I couldn't let him be mixed up with such things; but he ought to have known that! he ought to have trusted me! Oh, he's been too cruel; and I was so happy this morning! I ought to have known something was going to happen when I was so happy, it is always so with me. Oh, Mac! Mac! Mac! and I was so fond of you; I meant to be so good to you!

I did, indeed—and—and I should have given you up for your good—only, only for your good—when I heard of that disgrace; I would not have let it touch you—it would have broken my heart, but I would have done it! you've been too cruel, there was no need to be so cruel; I would have given you up!" And Jessie wept and sobbed, and wept and sobbed, until she could weep no more. Then she lay for a while quiet and exhausted, and presently fell asleep, "sleeping for sorrow."

Another post came, but it brought no tidings of Mac.

Jessie awoke.

The working day closed. Alison, restless, and tired of the tedious hours, stole upstairs again: "Jessie, darling! do let me in; I really must come in!" she begged again, tapping at the door. She waited for a minute and then heard the lock turning. She opened the door. Jessie was slowly recrossing the room to the washing-stand, where she had been sponging her face.

"No letter has come?" Jessie asked, quietly.

"No," said Alison, with extreme reluctance.

"There will not be one," said Jessie, with a hard distinctness most unnatural to her. "It is all over." She had evidently been packing up all the letters she had had

from Mac, when Alison had interrupted her. She went to the toilet-table; and took up several which lay there, and put them one on the other very deliberately.

"Jessie! you are not going to send them back; that's absurd!" exclaimed Alison, looking at the letters.

"You will allow me to know my own business," said Jessie, coldly, adding another letter to the pile.

"Yes, yes, of course; but wait, there may —indeed I think there must be an accident."

"There is no accident," said Jessie, with decision.

"No accident! What do you mean?" asked Alison. "You can't surely think that Mac, who is the soul of honour, deficient though he may be in some things, would wilfully disappoint you? That is too wildly improbable."

"I have ceased to believe in honour among men," said Jessie, bitterly; "I believed in Mac with all my heart."

"Then you might have more confidence in him," said Alison; to whom there was still no connection between "Arnold Birkett" and Mac's non-appearance.

"I am the better judge of that," said Jessie.

Alison said nothing, she changed her morning dress for the one she wore of an evening.

Jessie felt, with a horrible tightening of the tension of her nerves, that she, too, must change her dress, and appear as if, since she sat with the others at breakfast, all her life had not been ruined.

She felt it—it reminded her of that turning the screw of the rack, the thought of which had often made her shudder when she had looked at the Tower.

"Then they racked limbs; now they rack hearts," she said to herself, taking up all the letters, and throwing them into the desk she kept them in, the letters she had kissed and fondled so tenderly.

She locked them up, changed her dress, arranged her hair and the details of her toilet as carefully as ever; the set look in her face brought tears into Alison's eyes, but Jessie had none in hers.

"Have you told her?" asked Arthur Bayliss, under his voice, coming into John Harbuckle's office as the books were being put away. He looked haggard and careworn, and altogther jaded.

"I have," returned Harbuckle, turning the lock of his iron safe.

"How did she take it?" Bayliss asked, nervously.

"Badly. She was expecting the young man

from Birrendale this morning, but he didn't come. I didn't know or I would not have told her to-day; the two things together were more than she could stand. We've hurt her very much."

"Where is she?" asked Bayliss with sudden agitation.

"I believe she has been in her room ever since."

"I must go to her," said Bayliss.

"Will it be wise?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I must go;" and without ceremony he ran upstairs.

"Mary, I hear Jessie is—is not well; which is her room?" he said, meeting Mary Bayliss, on the landing.

"I'll go and tell her you're here."

"No, no—I'll go. She'll come to me."

Mary pointed out the room, he hurried up.

"Jessie, darling! are you ill?" he called, his voice trembling beyond control.

Jessie's voice was perfectly clear as she answered.

"No, go into the drawing-room. I will come to you."

He went into the drawing-room; Mrs. Bayliss saw him there, but was wise enough to leave him alone.

He walked about restlessly for a minute or two, and then Jessie came in.

He stopped and looked at her as she slowly moved towards him.

Her face was pallid, her eyelids heavy, her beautiful lips as pale as if they had been chiselled by a sculptor. He was frightened, almost terror-stricken, he could hardly go to meet her.

She came nearer, he moved a step or two, he took her in his arms, bent over her and kissed her tenderly.

"My darling, you have been pained! I was obliged to let you know or I would have kept it from you," he whispered.

"I have been pained," she said, distinctly, slipping away from him.

"I am sorry your Mac should not have come to-day. He will be here presently," said Jessie's father, soothingly.

"He will never be here any more," said Jessie, with calm despair, turning away.

"Don't think that! Don't think that! Of course he'll come!—why shouldn't he?"

"He didn't know I was Arnold Birkett's daughter when we were engaged; he knows it now," said Jessie, slowly and clearly, but without turning to her father.

She sat down at some distance from him—

her head still averted. Her father, quite unprepared for this turn, was utterly staggered.

"Knows! How can he know?" he asked, after a long pause.

"I am sure he does," said Jessie; "that is why he has not come."

"If so—he's a cad, a cad you're well rid of!" exclaimed Arthur Bayliss. The contemptuous word and tone roused Jessie. She came to her father with bowed head and outstretched arms: ', I belong to you! I belong to you now!" she sobbed, her head sinking on his shoulder. "And—and"—with tears—"I'll be kind to you—I will, indeed; I've nobody else to be good to now!"

He led her to the sofa and let her weep on.

"Why did I come back to trouble you?" he asked, presently.

"Don't—don't say that; I am glad you've come, indeed, indeed I am!" cried Jessie.

"I'm not," said he. "My darling, don't cry so—you'll hurt yourself! Look up—look up, dear. I've had a good day; I've made a great deal of money, more than I ever made before in one day. If I could make as much every day all would soon be righted—all that can be righted. He doesn't know, depend upon it, he doesn't! Don't quite break my

heart, Jessie ; look up—encourage me a little, Jessie ; it will all be righted ! "

" Soon? " she asked, raising her head.

" Soon?"—and the sight of her quivering lips made his own tremble—" soon ? My child, how can I tell ? "

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BAKING OF THE OAT CAKES.

ALISON awoke that night to find Jessie sitting by the window.

"Do try to sleep!" she said.

"I can't; I shall never sleep any more," replied the voice from the window.

"But you might be resting," suggested Alison.

"I can rest nowhere," Jessie said, neither wildly or tearfully, but with quiet sadness.

Alison said no more, she lay still, praying.

Alison, not being in love with Mac, had more faith in him than Jessie had. This was strange, but it is a thing that often happens. Jealousies and suspicions are born of affection. Alison felt that it would be contrary to Mac's nature to do a base or cruel thing; Jessie, since she had heard of Arnold Birkett, had believed that Mac had left her—that Mac had feared to be mixed up with discreditable affairs and had left her.

In the silence of the summer night, as she

sat there by the window in the moonlight, there gradually came into her mind—not very distinctly, but with profound solemnity—the feeling that *Mac had gone out of existence.*

She tried to think of him as somewhere, but could not.

"Perhaps he's dead—perhaps, while I have been thinking cruel thoughts about him, he is lying dead."

But her mother was dead, yet she always felt that mother was somewhere in heaven; she came to her in dreams. And then, it may have been that the moon-light, streaming on to the floor, brought back that stormy night at Birrendale when she had dreamed of her mother's smile—she thought of the placid happiness that had touched her then, and felt that if Mac were gone away to that mysterious land, he would be free to make her know by some slight token that he still thought of her there.

To-night she only felt that Mac was gone; gone completely, as if he had ceased to exist, as if he had been blotted out of creation.

Not crudely, as I have been obliged to put it down, did Jessie feel this, but they weighed heavily on her mind those words:

"Mac is gone."

The wheels of time seemed to stand still for

her, so slowly they turned; but, imperceptible as was their movement, at length the day dawned, the early toilers began their work, the light carts rattled over the stones, the strong horses laboured up the hill with the heavy vans, and Jessie, tired out, crept back to Alison and fell asleep.

Yet she awoke about the usual time. Hope sprang up afresh; there might be a letter. She dressed, and went downstairs. There was no letter.

Her father came round to breakfast. She tried to appear cheerful; but they all looked dreadful to her; she fancied that all were thinking:

"Poor Jessie! Mac's left her."

Then came more waiting, and more waiting; and then again it struck eleven, then it was a quarter past.

"Yesterday," thought Jessie, remembering how impossible it had seemed to wait even a minute, "yesterday I felt I couldn't wait one instant, now I know I can; but what pain! ah, what pain!"

Her father came in to lunch—to dinner—he spent the evening there. She sat with him for an hour in the gardens of the square—an interminable hour to her.

The last fortnight had been excessively hot.

Mrs. Bayliss had for some days been thinking about the sea-side, for the front rooms of the house were now obliged to be furnished with out-side blinds, and were even then oppressive. The plane tree that stands on the site of the gallows tree of the bad old days was dusty and brown; the broad pavement in front of the Trinity House glared white in the heat.

"John," said Mrs. Bayliss to her brother, when they were alone, while Jessie and her father were out of doors, "under the circumstances, the best thing we can do is to take her down to the sea for a change."

"I'm afraid she'll take her trouble with her," said John; "however, as far as I'm concerned, I should be very willing for you to take the girls. Her father may, however, have something to say in the matter."

"Oh, I can manage that. He will be sure to take my advice," said Mrs. Bayliss. "It will be the best thing for her."

"I am not so certain," said John; "but it is no longer a question for me to decide, you must ask her father."

"She wants change—both the girls want change," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"Indeed, mother, I don't," said Alison. "I shall pine away if you take me out of the

City. And as for its being hot here, why there's always a shady side to all the streets; and no place can be interesting to me in comparison with London, east of Westminster, where, I'll admit freely, the interest pretty nearly ceases."

"You're a genuine Harbuckle, Alison; there's not much of the Bayliss in you, unfortunately. I'm afraid you're more like your grandparents——"

"Why 'afraid,' mother?" interrupted Alison; "they were all very good people."

"Oh yes, of course, very good people, and I was very fond of them," said their daughter, testily; "but they had no—I can hardly express what I mean, there was something lacking in them, they had no social ambition, no—in fact they were content to be simple citizens. The Baylisses are so different. That's what I like in Jessie, she is such a thorough Bayliss; I do wish, Alison, that you were. I'm sure I don't know what is to become of you!"

"Oh, Mary, you needn't trouble yourself about Alison's future! But I think, if Jessie's father will consent to it, you'd better all of you go to the sea-side for a little while," said uncle John.

"Well, when will you be able to take us John?" asked the widow.

"*Take you*, my dear! That is quite another thing. I'll come down and see you from Saturday until Monday, if you like, but as for staying a whole week at the seaside, why, I should be dead by the end of it," said John Harbuckle.

"Is it possible for Arthur Bayliss to spare the time? It's so dull alone," said Mary.

"He can't get away just now. There's a run on shellac. Mincing Lane's gone mad. I hope Bayliss will make his fortune. He couldn't possibly leave just now."

"Was there ever a business man who *could* get away when the women of his family wanted him?" asked Mary, "No! My poor James was always ready to take us anywhere! And I must say I hate going about alone."

"But there are the girls to go with you," suggested John, mildly.

"The girls!" retorted the widow; "I love them dearly, but how can I make companions of girls? I've always been used to the attention of men," and her tone implied, "I can't get accustomed to doing without it."

"I am sorry, Mary," said John; "but really I can only offer you the choice of staying here or going with the girls."

"That's a subterfuge quite unworthy of you, John!" exclaimed Mary, with some temper.

"Not at all!" said he, quietly.

"Why don't you speak out the honest truth," said Mary, with a sneer; "why don't you say that we bore you, that you couldn't tolerate our society for a whole week!"

"Such an assertion would be so much more than the truth that it would be liker falsehood. Not your society, my dear, but the sea-side for a week would be the infliction I could not reasonably hope to survive," said John Harbuckle.

"There, there, John!—say no more about it! We won't go, that's decided! We'll stay here and be suffocated! I thought that you, at least, would have had some feeling for poor Jessie if for no one else!" and Mary Bayliss took up the evening paper and began to read it with great avidity.

There was something peculiarly irritating just then in the expression Mrs. Bayliss managed to put into her colourless eye-lashes as she read.

John Harbuckle could not stand it, so retired to his den; but, not being able to settle to work, he and Alison went out on an exploring expedition.

Retributive justice, however, tracked down the nefarious old bachelor; he had to suffer for his atrocious conduct in disregarding his

sister's wishes. That very evening the weather changed. The British Isles were visited by one of those sudden atmospheric depressions which have of late years recurred so frequently that we now expect to be wearing our warmest winter clothing for a few weeks in the middle of summer.

That sudden and extreme change was accompanied by heavy rains and a violent gale.

John Harbuckle, the man who refused to take his sister to the sea-side, had to go down to Deal all by himself, to look after a ship that had been badly damaged.

Some one was glad he had to go—that some one was Jessie Bayliss. He had carefully avoided the slightest expression of pity or anxiety, but she felt them all the same. It was a relief to her that he was obliged to go.

Perhaps, too, it was a relief to him ; perhaps, after all, he was glad to be called away ; but if so, what becomes of the retributive justice theory? In which, it may be added, Mrs. Bayliss implicitly believed.

It was Wednesday when Jessie had expected Mac at eleven precisely. The remainder of the week was spent, more or less, in misery by the greater proportion of the inhabitants of the British Isles. Invalids who had been

lingering on during the fine weather, infants, and old people dropped off; dyspeptics sank into abject wretchedness.

Shellac, which had been running up at a wonderful rate for some time past, fell as suddenly as the barometer; not that the weather had anything to do with it, but that it so happened the two falls were simultaneous. The last thing John Harbuckle heard before he left town was that one of the speculators had committed suicide.

The girls could not go out. They worked away at winter socks (for they knitted as quickly as if born north of the Tweed), Jessie's to be for her father, and Alison's for uncle John. But the time dragged on slowly, and still more slowly, until the only two things that seemed certain were that the end of the week would never come, and that it would never leave off raining.

On Friday afternoon, Alison was sitting by one rain-washed window, knitting and reading, and Jessie was at the other window knitting, with a book upon her lap, but not reading, only thinking: when would the horrible suspense end, when would this dull pain give place to sharper agony, or sudden joy; when should she know the worst?

Mrs. Bayliss had been hemming some of

those muslin bands which form so conspicuous a part of the insignia of widowhood, but had fallen asleep in the arm-chair, under the very eye of the grandfather with the Lord Mayor's collar of S.S. Within the room there was not the slightest sound, except the hurried ticking of the old-fashioned clock, with the mahogany roof shaped like a pagoda.

Presently Jessie felt a sob rising that nothing except the promptest action could conquer. She sprang up, put down the book and knitting, went to the other window and nestled against Alison, as if for warmth.

"Isn't it wet? Birrendale wasn't wetter," Jessie said under her voice.

Alison looked out of the wet window, to the wet trees, the wet vans, the wet carmen, the wet Tower beyond, dimly seen through the drenching rain.

"Cold and grey and wet, oh, how wet!" Alison said, shuddering.

"There's only one thing that I could really enjoy," said Jessie, in a more natural voice, as if suddenly returning to her own self; "I could enjoy sconing and oat-caking. Couldn't you now? What a comfort it used to be at Cauldknowe! I do miss the kitchen fire so much! I suppose you couldn't beard that

lioness in her den for me, could you?" she added, with an appealing little whine.

"What *couldn't* I do for you!" exclaimed Alison. "Name that thing."

"You were always a tackler and a backer up!" said Jessie. "I shall always give you credit for those two great qualities. Will you tackle that lioness?—will you back me up if I invade the 'department,' as uncle John calls it? I can't stand this any longer; I shall cry directly, if you don't take me into the kitchen."

"Not another word!" said Alison, putting her finger mysteriously to her lips. "Victory or Westminster Abbey!" and drawing Jessie's arm within her own, she marched boldly to the attack.

But in a very few minutes the brave girls returned crest-fallen. The lioness had shown more teeth and tongue than they had been prepared for; they had been shamefully routed. The noise of their precipitate retreat aroused the slumberer in the arm-chair.

Mrs. Bayliss heard their indignant complaints. She recognised the opportunity for which she had for some days been waiting. She arose, struck one decisive blow; the tyrant met a tyrant's fate: that very evening they all went to bed, free, but cookless. Mrs. Robbins's third successor had departed.

Saturday, a day of brown fog, found them busy, but comparatively happy, for even Jessie began to think hopefully, as she deftly kneaded up the oatmeal in that simple primitive way, so unattainable to the Londoner, even Jessie began to fancy that if Mac really cared for her, which she thought must be the case, and if she really cared for him, of which she had now not the slightest doubt, why, then, things would come right after all. In the meanwhile her father had never tasted oat-cakes of her own making, and so—throwing a "quarter" carefully off her pretty hands on to the hot girdle—and so it was pleasant to be able to be free to make them once more.

"How very strange I should be feeling that anything is pleasant," Jessie said, returning to the board for another quarter-cake.

"And I think you'll say I've built up just a lovely arrangement for 'firing them,'" said Alison, who had been engaged in front of the stove for some minutes. (Oat-cake, you must know, is first baked on the girdle, and then slightly browned in front of the fire.) "You bake, Jessie, and I'll fire. Look, what with this hanger and these two flat irons, I've an excellent substitute for that brander we were stupid enough to leave behind us at Cauldknowe. Now, have you some baked? There,

what could be better? What, they won't stand up, won't they? But they shall. I'll wrastle with them—as McQuade used to say—and I'll conquer them; never fash yourself, my dear!"

"That's capital," said Jessie, laughing. ("How very curious I should laugh," she said to herself.) "Here, Alison, these on the girdle are done now; but this meal doesn't seem just like the meal we had in Birrendale. How very strange I should be taking an interest in these things," Jessie added, inwardly.

"Now, Alison, they're all done to a turn. I wonder, will my father be just delighted with them?—Aren't they neat now?" she asked, quite gleefully, as Alison stood the last quarter up on end to cool.

Jessie spoke gleefully, but Alison looked rather sharply at her, and moved a step nearer to her.

"And how very strange it is that I should be quite happy again, and not care for Mac in the least! How very, very strange!" said Jessie to herself, and suddenly all the world grew blank and her head sank upon Alison's shoulder; Jessie had fainted away.

END OF VOL. II.

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